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ALLOTMENTS FOR ALL

The Story of a Great Movement

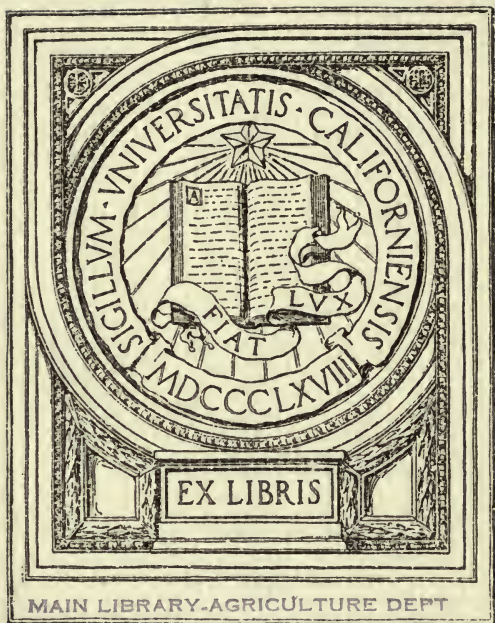
By GERALD W. BUTCHER

Superintendent and Instructor, The Vacant Land Cultivation
Society ; Hon. Organizing Director, London and Southern
Section of the National Union of Allotment Holders ;
Member of Executive, National Union of
Allotment Holders



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MR. JOSEPH FELS, PIONEER OF THE
ALLOTMENT MOVEMENT.

ALLOTMENTS FOR ALL

THE STORY OF A GREAT MOVEMENT

BY

GERALD W. BUTCHER

*Superintendent and Instructor, The Vacant Land Cultivation
Society; Hon. Organizing Director, London and Southern
Section of the National Union of Allotment Holders;
Member of Executive, National Union of
Allotment Holders*

YE FRIENDS TO TRUTH, YE STATESMEN WHO SURVEY
THE RICH MAN'S JOYS INCREASE, THE POOR'S DECAY;
'TIS YOURS TO JUDGE HOW WIDE THE LIMITS STAND
BETWEEN A SPLENDID AND A HAPPY LAND.

GOLDSMITH.



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PREFACE

NOT until a year ago were allotment gardens officially regarded as a factor of importance in the sense that they contributed substantially to the home-grown food supplies of this country. It required a Great War to do this, and the recognition of the necessity for greatly increasing the area of land under cultivation has opened the eyes of the Government to the vast potentialities arising out of the simple process of forging a link between unused land and the spare-time worker. That link was forged, though defectively, as the following pages will show, by a Regulation of the Defence of the Realm Act, which enabled the Government to sweep aside the one obstacle in the way—the inaccessibility of the land. The Government built better than they knew. For by the passing of the Cultivation of Lands Orders, the most drastic statute of land reform was enacted. State appropriation of land for the common good before the war was unheard of. By releasing the land it was forced into use. At the sign of D.O.R.A., tens of thousands of willing citizens at once stepped into the hunger-breach created by war and the submarine, and commenced to grow some of their own food. That the war-time allotment-holder has rendered magnificent service during the past year is incontrovertible. In no small measure he has added to the food supply at a time when a grave shortage was imminent. In a few weeks the wretched potato queues were abolished—let us hope for ever—the consumption of bread was markedly reduced, enormous quantities of meat and other foodstuffs were saved, as also were transport and labour, all of which was, and is, of inestimable advantage to the country.

As a record of their remarkable achievement and out of a sincere regard for their future aspirations, this little book has been written in the hope that it may help to consolidate the great and growing movement of men and women plot-holders who so splendidly, selflessly and efficiently responded to the call of the nation to grow food at a time of pressing need.

G. W. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	5

CHAPTER I

Pre-war allotments—Their origin and purpose—Their rise in popularity—State legislation—Enter “Dora”	9
---	---

CHAPTER II

Pioneers of waste land cultivation—Joseph Fels—The Vacant Land Cultivation Society—Two years of war—Increasing demand for plots—The Cultivation of Lands Order—Fight with the L.C.C.—Legend of a Great Body—Dora’s loop-hole	15
--	----

CHAPTER III

“Allotmentitis”—“Harvest” Thanksgivings—Coping with the rush—Voluntary assistance—Lady surveyors—Some reclaiming stories—The building-plot pest—And its extermination	24
---	----

CHAPTER IV

Types of allotment-holders—The four men of Islington—Women plot-holders—The children—“Untrainables”—The story of Joseph—An expert view	32
--	----

CONTENTS

7.

CHAPTER V

PAGE

Social advantages of the allotment movement—Mutual assistance—The new vision—Lectures—Literature, good and bad—Personal instruction	43
---	----

CHAPTER VI

Intensive culture—The ten-rod plot—£. s. d. of allotments—Crops chiefly grown—Surplus produce	50
---	----

CHAPTER VII

How to get an allotment—Local societies—How to form them—Rules for members—Advantages of allotment societies—Co-operative hints	57
---	----

CHAPTER VIII

Allotments as an individual necessity—The call of the land—Allotments as a national necessity—"Easing up" the food markets—The great potato scandal—Food troubles of the future—War on monopoly	64
---	----

CHAPTER IX

Security of tenure—Aims of the National Union of Allotment Holders—Extension tinkering—The property fetish—A "peace peril"—What are we fighting to protect?	71
---	----

APPENDIX A—Official correspondence relating to the Cultivation of Lands Orders 1916-17	78
--	----

APPENDIX B—Official Note delegating the Powers of the Board of Agriculture under Cultivation of Lands Order 1916 to Metropolitan Boroughs	94
---	----

APPENDIX C—National Union of Allotment Holders Circular	95
---	----

ILLUSTRATIONS

MR. JOSEPH FELS	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
FOOD FROM THE WASTE	19
PLOT-HOLDERS COMBINE WORK WITH WORSHIP	24
A LONDON DESERT TAKEN OVER IN 1915	28
PLOT-HOLDERS AND CHILDREN AT WORK	37
NATIONAL ASSETS—LITTLE BOYS AND BIG POTATOES, SUMMER, 1917	44
A V.L.C.S. POTATO QUEUE, SUMMER, 1917	52
A LONDON POTATO QUEUE, SPRING, 1917	66

ALLOTMENTS FOR ALL

CHAPTER I

Pre-war allotments—Their origin and purpose—Their rise in popularity—State legislation—Enter "Dora."

If the old statute of Elizabeth, which laid down that every cottage built should have at least four acres of land attached to it, had been enforced until now, the land policy of this country and its relationship to the national food supply would be vastly different from what it is to-day; but we have to deal with things as they are, and not as they might have been in happier circumstances. The Elizabethan Act provided that such land should be attached to the dwelling, and as allotments proper are nearly always detached, it is not strictly correct to assign to that period the birth of allotments as a factor in augmenting the home-grown food supply. But the Act referred to did, in effect, establish the principle of ownership, or, at any rate, control of land by the working classes. And it is this principle which, as a right of citizenship, needs to be revived to-day.

Allotments, as we know and understand them, are tracts of land cut up into more or less even-sized plots, each of which is controlled and cultivated by its respective holder. They are to be distinguished from small holdings by their dimensions, and may be anything up to five acres. The allotments, however, with which we are here chiefly concerned are those of from one-sixteenth to one-eighth of an acre, and the system of providing these has been defined as "the practice of dividing land in small portions for cultivation by agricultural labourers and other cottagers at their leisure." Another definition describes the allotment as "a small piece of land, detached

from a cottage, let to a person to be cultivated by him as an aid to his sustenance, but not in substitution for his labour for wages." In recent years allotments have come more into favour among the better paid workers. It has often been said that, as wages go up, interest in allotments declines. This is a totally erroneous view, especially in urban districts, for, as we hope to prove, the land-hunger which is now so conspicuously manifesting itself has not been awakened merely by motives of personal gain or a transitory anxiety to increase the resources of the domestic exchequers, but in large numbers of cases simply by sheer love of the soil and delight in the operations of tilling it. The only instance where a waning interest in allotments might be shown is that of rural labourers, whose long hours, coupled with the physically trying conditions of their work, make gardening in spare time a doubtful pleasure. Lord Onslow ("Land and Allotments," 1886), commenting on this subject, stated that "in the northern counties, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Durham, Cumberland, and Lancashire, very little demand for allotments exists, chiefly owing to the high wages. . . ." This small demand was, however, probably due less to the reason stated than to the long hours of physical toil above referred to. It will be shown in a later chapter that there are other reasons to account for the fact that the demand for allotments is more real than apparent.

The history of allotments, while full of interest to the social student, is in many ways peculiarly complex—far too complex, certainly, for exhaustive narration in these pages. But as some familiarity with its main points is essential to the armoury of that great and growing band of allotment-holders who perceive in their plots of land the tangible symbol not only of an individual adventure but of a common campaign, it will be well to pass in brief review certain outstanding landmarks in the annals of the movement.

The newly awakening consciousness of a right on the part of the people to grow their own food on their own land is a direct development of the anciently recognized right on the part of the people to warm their hands in

their own houses. Long ago, villagers were granted the privilege of access to waste lands for the purpose of cutting turf, peat, furze or wood for firing; and out of this privilege arose the first allotments, called "fuel allotments," because the people who entered into possession of them did so by bartering their fuel rights. Between 1760 and 1801 nearly fifteen hundred Acts of Parliament (an average of almost one a week!) were passed to legalize the enclosure of some two and a half million acres of land; and many of these Acts dealt with the ancient question of fuel rights, in return for the waiving of which the parish poor were provided with allotments.

For the most part, however, these fuel allotments were found by the people to be far from satisfactory. Many of them were ridiculously small. Many were heart-breakingly unproductive. Many, again, were so situated that it was almost impossible for their owners to get at them at all. While some even possessed all three disadvantages. Murmurs of discontent arose on every side. "We want our land for a purpose, not for mere pride of occupation," grumbled the people; and vague promises of amelioration were received with small enthusiasm. They wanted Acts, not words. And in the end they got one. In 1819 an Act was passed which, linking up allotments with the Poor Law, empowered churchwardens and overseers to buy or hire "poor allotments," plots of land not exceeding twenty acres in area, to be let out to the poor and unemployed. Authority was also granted for the enclosure of waste land, to be cultivated by the people, provided the consent of the lord of the manor and of the majority of the inhabitants could be obtained. Theoretically, this was a "big push" in the right direction. Practically, it was discovered that, whatever the wishes of the inhabitants, lords of manors for the most part obstinately insisted on converting themselves into admirable imitations of brick walls.

The next landmark in the history of allotments was the "field garden." "The General Enclosure Act of 1845," says Mr. Arthur W. Ashby, to whose "Allotments and Small Holdings in Oxfordshire" we are much indebted for the facts contained in this survey, "provided

for the grant of a plot of land for field gardens for the labouring poor of a parish on an enclosure being made, and also for the management of these field gardens by the incumbent of the parish, the churchwardens, and other persons to be elected, this body to be styled 'the Allotment Wardens.' " It may here be mentioned that, except where ecclesiastic property is concerned, these duties have since been vested in the Parish Council.

With the exception of the above Act, for a period of fifty years (1832-82) public action with respect to the provision of allotments remained in a state of complete suspension. Meanwhile, however, the "private allotment" movement was gaining ground (in the literal sense of the words!) with a grim steadiness which was bound, sooner or later, to compel attention. The country was, in fact, endorsing in the most practical manner possible the conclusions of the Poor Law Commission of 1832, which declared the amount of land which a labourer could cultivate to be usually less than half an acre; the system of letting land by private individuals, unlike the system of letting land by parish officials, to be eminently successful; and the occupation of land by labourers to be beneficial to lessor as well as to occupier. Small fields were let out in small parcels by small owners, while here and there portions of big estates were rented as field gardens or larger allotments—the rent, be it noted, sometimes amounting to 300 per cent. as much as that demanded for farm land of equivalent size and quality. Things were beginning to hum, and in the seventies the activities of the Labourers' Union provided the movement with such a substantial backing that our legislators were at last compelled to turn their attention once again to the allotment question, and the result of their cogitations appeared in the Allotments' Extension Act of 1882, an Act which empowered parochial charities to establish allotments on charity lands.

Impetus having been thus once more provided for public action in the matter, Acts dealing with the great allotment movement now became a common feature of parliamentary life, and M.P.'s began to awaken, if somewhat dimly and unwillingly, to the suspicion that there

might, after all, be some really fundamental connection between the people and the land. In 1887, 1890, and 1894, three important measures were passed into law, the chief points of which may be summarized as follows:—

Allotment Act, 1887.—If of opinion that there was a demand for allotments by the labouring population of their district or parish, urban or rural authorities might purchase or hire such land by voluntary agreement with the owner and let it out in allotments.

Allotment Act, 1890.—County Council must have a Standing Committee on allotments which, where sanitary authorities proved unable to obtain land by voluntary agreement, should institute public enquiry.

Local Government Act, 1894.—Parish Council given power to provide land for allotments when possible to hire by voluntary agreement; when impossible, Parish Council must make application to County Council for an order, subject to confirmation of Local Government Board. No land to be acquired except at reasonable rent and on reasonable conditions, and all rents obtained to cover expenses.

It is interesting to note in passing that, until 1908, District or Parish Councils were empowered, with the consent of the Local Government Board, to make what regulations they pleased for the observance of the holders of the allotments which they had provided. These generally resolved themselves into the commandments:—

Thou shalt keep thy allotment free from weeds.

Thou shalt manure thy allotment, and otherwise maintain it in a fit state of cultivation.

Thou shalt plant no trees nor shrubs, lest they should prove a hindrance to the allotment of thy neighbour.

Thou shalt keep cut and trimmed every hedge which formeth a part of thy allotment.

Thou shalt deposit no weeds, nor manure, nor any obstruction whatsoever upon any road or path, nor cause any nuisance or annoyance to thy neighbour or thy neighbour's neighbours.

In 1907 came the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, and its provisions were consolidated in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1908 with those of previous measures dealing with the subject. Five acres was prescribed as the limit of land which the local councils might provide, in one or more allotments, without the sanction of the County Council; one acre was prescribed as the limit of

land which any applicant might demand by right, though he might get more by favour. Sub-letting allotments was forbidden, co-operative societies were rendered eligible as applicants. Councils might delegate their powers to Allotment Wardens, whom they might appoint and remove at will; and these Allotment Wardens might transfer their land and powers to a council. Where Local Councils were unable to furnish allotments, County Councils might step in, while the Board of Agriculture, fountain-head of all, might override the powers of all councils and make them over to the Small Holdings Commissioners.

There, briefly, you have the position of affairs in the allotment world when war broke out and the scarcity of food supplies necessitated the application of the Defence of the Realm Act to the great land problem. That the position was satisfactory no one with any inside knowledge of the actual working of these various Acts could possibly contend. Until two years of war compelled the Government to act, the question of establishing small allotment gardens in every town and village never received due consideration from the State. Indeed, in rural districts before the war only about two-thirds of all the villages in England and Wales had any allotments, in spite of the demand that undoubtedly existed; and in urban districts, where, if anything, the demand was even more pronounced, immense tracts of land, until the spring of 1917, were everywhere left idle and derelict, waiting for the builder.

That such land could be converted into "fair fields full of folk" by the simple process of making groups of allotments has been amply proved by the operation of "Dora," as the Defence of the Realm Act is familiarly designated, which definitely conscribed certain unused land for cultivation. But until December 1916, when the Government first awoke to the imperative need of exploiting the resources of unused land, it was left to the initiative of voluntary societies and a handful of ardent land reformers to demonstrate the urgent national necessity of using it as a means for providing the people with healthful recreation and profitable spare-time occupation, to the immeasurable benefit of the country as a whole.

CHAPTER II

Pioneers of waste land cultivation—Joseph Fels—The Vacant Land Cultivation Society—Two years of war—Increasing demand for plots—The Cultivation of Lands Order—Fight with the L.C.C.—Legend of a Great Body—Dora's loophole.

THE utilization of vacant land is thought by many people to be an original idea inspired by the economic pressure, of war. This, however, is not the case, and it is well, in view of the drastic changes in public and social life which will undoubtedly emerge from the present "back-to-the-land" movement, that the following facts should be placed on record.

The movement for securing the temporary loan of pieces of vacant land originated with our American cousins over twenty years ago. Since then, vacant lots societies, formed in various parts of Philadelphia, New York, and other cities, have become firmly established and are to-day closely woven into the fabric of social life in American towns. The movement in this country also owes its inception to American thought and influence; to the efforts, in fact, of a single American citizen, Mr. Joseph Fels, founder of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society. The name of Joseph Fels will always be associated with the land movement, in which connection he carried on such admirable work for many years before his death. At the period when the V.L.C.S. was founded (November 8, 1907), questions of unemployment were much to the fore, and Mr. Fels, realizing the intimate connection between the two great problems of idle land and idle labour, conceived the brilliant idea of curing both with a single remedy.

From 1907 to 1914 the endeavours of the London Society to get waste land utilized throughout the country made but little progress, partly owing to the lack of sympathy of landowners, and partly owing to the customary wet blanket of officialdom. At the outbreak of war the Society's plot-holders numbered 140, representing

in land about 17 acres. This was the position after seven years of constant endeavour to persuade landowners in the County of London that idle land converted into fertile allotments not only afforded healthful recreation to the cultivators and provided much-needed food for working-class families, but also improved the condition and appearance of the land itself. Now, however, owing to the vital urgency of the situation the Society decided to reorganize its constitution and to reopen its campaign for the cultivation of derelict building sites. It will be remembered that when the war began, it was generally believed that a few hard-fought battles would quickly settle the issue. Even in the highest circles it was fully anticipated that the war would be over before the spring of 1915. And in view of the extraordinary situation which prevailed at the time and of the dislocation of trade caused by the sudden transformation from peace to war conditions it was the considered opinion of many that before long unemployment would rack the nation from end to end. Previous to this, as has already been stated, the principal object of the V.L.C.S. had been to provide additional employment for the partially employed. Now, in view of the threatened unprecedented eruption of the labour market, it was thought that by extending the scope of the movement, the evils resulting from unemployment, especially in larger towns, could be largely alleviated at the critical period of demobilization.

We are approaching the completion of the fourth year of war, and the prospects of an early peace appear as remote as ever. Nevertheless, efforts to obtain further large areas of land for the provision of allotments have never slackened; and while it is true that the land originally taken over has not been utilized for the purpose intended, the incidence of the national food shortage, which was inevitable in the circumstances, more than justified the work already done. From the beginning of the war until the end of 1916, inspectors were engaged in locating building sites and other suitable land in and around the Metropolis, with a view to obtaining its use for allotments. A register was kept in which the dates of all such inspections were recorded, together with the area of the land,

the district in which it was situated, the quality of the soil, fencing and other important information; also the date on which application was made to the owner or agent for the use of the land. Although many hundreds of acres were thus inspected and scores of letters were addressed to landowners appealing for help and inviting co-operation, by the end of 1916 the Society's plot-holders had increased to no more than 800, who were cultivating some fifty acres.

The need for land in consequence of the growing shortage of food was constantly being impressed upon landowners and the Government. The demand for plots also became steadily greater. The waiting list grew more lengthy every day, until the army of unsatisfied applicants for plots outnumbered actual plot-holders by three to one. Indeed, if all those hungry for allotments could have lined up on the principle of food queues, so sensational would have been the spectacle presented that the Press must inevitably have devoted columns to the exposition of this unpardonable scandal. In view of the rapidly increasing demand for plots, it was found necessary to file the applications in their respective districts and boroughs, in the order of date in which they were received, while in the matter of allocating plots, the continued and increasing shortage of food made a change of policy imperative. Thus, whereas in the past the claims of the most needy families had, as far as possible, been given priority, it now became inevitably a case of first come, first served, and the devil take the hindmost. The slow, steady demand of the past had developed into a veritable scramble.

It was in the early days of November, 1916, that the Society was invited to send representatives to the Board of Agriculture to interview the then President, Lord Crawford. With all due humility, as became mere citizens, when brought into the presence of a great personage of the State, especially one no less than a Minister of the Crown, the writer and the hon. secretary of the V.L.C.S. were admitted to the sanctum of the custodian of British Agriculture and there invited to explain the difficulties encountered by the Society in prosecuting its aims. The President received them most courteously, and, after

an interview lasting an hour or more, they left with the full knowledge that probably the greatest drama which had taken place in land reform for many generations was about to be enacted. For once, at any rate, the privilege of the few was to become the right of the many. By virtue of the powers conferred by the Defence of the Realm Regulations, the Government was about to lay its hand upon the most sacred of monopolies, the most jealously guarded of all vested interests; it intended, briefly, to commandeer certain land in order that allotments might be provided on a large and unprecedented scale.

A week or two later the public was officially informed of the new departure, and when the terms of the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, were finally published, it became manifest to all that the greatest obstacle allotment workers had experienced—the securing of land—had been overcome. By virtue of this Order, all unoccupied (i.e. unrated) land in boroughs and urban districts in England and Wales could be appropriated by the Board of Agriculture, or by persons acting on behalf of the Board, and this without notification having been given to the landowner of the Board's intention. (See Appendix A for full quotation of the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, together with other official orders and documents subsequently issued in order to facilitate and extend the operation of the Act.)

Immediately the Vacant Land Cultivation Society was informed of the powers bestowed on the L.C.C. under the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, an appointment was made for the writer and the hon. secretary to attend before the Parks Committee, in order that they might arrange the methods and terms under which the Society should embark upon the work. There followed several consultations, and heads of agreement were drawn up, amended, and approved without delay. Having arranged to accept a licence framed on the heads of agreement, the Society promptly set to work by asking whether a start might be made on the "Furzedown Estate," Tooting, for which, prior to the above Order, many hundreds of applicants had been waiting week after week,



FOOD FROM THE WASTE.

A first-prize exhibit of vegetables grown on derelict London land—First year cultivation.

all endeavours to induce the owners to loan the land for food cultivation having been made in vain. Now at last the triumph of sanity appeared to be in sight; but to the great surprise of those most intimately concerned, the L.C.C., instead of rendering that influential assistance which had naturally been expected of it, now began to raise obstacle after obstacle, one official declaring that he would not "be a party to commandeering land without giving notice to the owner." This, notwithstanding the fact that the Order expressly authorized the allotment authority to take possession of the land, where there was a demand for it, and give notice to the owner *afterwards*. (See Appendix A, clause 2, Statutory Rules and Orders, 1916.) Meanwhile, the many hundreds of applicants for the Furzedown Estate were beginning to show signs of discontent at the excuses and procrastination of the L.C.C. It must be borne in mind that while the owners and subsequently the L.C.C. officials were raising obstacles, these applicants had in most instances been waiting many weeks, and only by the exercise of the greatest tact had they been induced to restrain their impatience.

Ultimately, after public meetings held in the vicinity of the land had made vigorous protests against the inaction of the L.C.C., about half the land was handed over, and hundreds of plot-holders worked through the Christmas holidays in preparing the ground.

After the Christmas holidays applications were from time to time sent to the L.C.C., asking them for authority to take over various plots of London land. The total amount applied for was 650 acres; but, with the exception of two acres at Plumstead (subsequently withdrawn by the L.C.C. for football) and the remainder of the Furzedown Estate (making a total of 25 acres), no further land was loaned by the L.C.C. to the London Society. Various excuses were, of course, put forward, one being that the Council had been asked to take possession of land "consisting almost entirely of the sites of basement houses and covered with from 10 to 20 feet of brick debris, such as the building plots north of the British Museum." It cannot be too strongly emphasized that all the land

applied for by the V.L.C.S. had been inspected by practical horticulturists and pronounced by them as suitable for cultivation; and it may be pointed out that the British Museum plots above referred to are now under cultivation and doing extremely well.

It is curious to note that, at the very time when the L.C.C. was raising objections to taking over unrated land, as authorized, the Government extended their order so as to enable them to requisition rated land, without obtaining the consent of the owner or occupier. Of course, the L.C.C. remained obdurate! (See Board of Agriculture's letter, page 92.)

A feature of the deplorable lack of public spirit displayed by the L.C.C. was their stubborn resistance to the wave of popular opinion which hurled itself against them. In no single instance did any of the great dailies attempt to justify the position taken up by the Council. Some, indeed, definitely adopted the policy of condemning wholeheartedly the blocking methods adopted by the L.C.C. and its permanent officials, the London *Evening News* especially rendering a great public service in supporting the demands of the Government and the people. The following, which appeared as a leader in that journal on January 2, 1917, is indicative of the state of things existing at that time:—

THE GREAT BODY AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

A FABLE OF TO-DAY

Once upon a time, long, long ago—in fact, before the war—there was a Great Body called the L.C.C., which modelled itself upon the lines of the Mother of Parliaments. It had members and parties and much internecine strife, and red tape and officials—especially the officials—and it moved with the slowness and deliberation which is characteristic of a Great Body.

And then war came upon the land, and slowly at first but more and more rapidly as time went on the face of things was altered. Many differences began to be noted by the people in their daily lives, and even the Mother of Parliaments received a severe shaking up, but there was one thing which the war could not alter, and that was the L.C.C. It still retained its committees and its red tape and its officials, and when any one asked it whether it knew that there was a war on it would reply, "*We understand that this is the case, but our organization being already perfect, and it being*

clear that any change must be for the worse, we do not propose to take any steps in the matter."

Now during the war there came a year of bad harvests, and what with small crops and the lack of means to carry what corn there was, and the fact that many men had forsaken tilling for fighting, there was a shortage of food in the land, and the State called upon all its citizens earnestly to cultivate such soil as lay ready to their hands. To this end the Local Bodies were urged to make a record of all vacant land under their respective jurisdictions and to parcel it out among those who were willing to help in making it bear the crops which were so sorely needed.

Many bodies at this word fell to upon the task, so that in quite a short space of time there were men digging with spades and enthusiasm to prepare the soil for the harvest. But the L.C.C., being a Great Body, merely referred the matter to a Committee, which discussed it with another Committee, which disagreed with everything the first Committee had said, so that in the end the only crop which was raised was a crop of objections.

The common ordinary people to the number of 6,000 cried aloud for land to cultivate, that later on they might have bread and potatoes to eat, but the L.C.C. absolutely declined to be hurried. The fact that so many stalwart men were willing to serve their country in their spare time had no interest for it. It wanted additional information and statistics, and as for the patriotic cultivators who had nothing to cultivate, if they grew weary of waiting they could lean upon their spades, which were admirably adapted for this purpose.

Now there was a Society for the Cultivation of Vacant Land, which not being a Great Body had got to work, and scheduled the vacant land and the applications therefor, and demanded of the L.C.C. some 600 acres to fill the present needs of the patriotic cultivators. The Great Body replied, "Go away; can't you see that we are busy raising objections? Do you not know that it is the first maxim of officialdom that what has never been done before cannot be done at all?"

Thus were the glorious traditions of officialdom upheld before the face of the enemy. Nevertheless, at the end of three weeks, out of 14,000 vacant acres no less than 23 had been allotted, and it was calculated that at this phenomenal rate of progress all the land would be under crops in another thirty years or so, if the war should last so long.

But the patriotic cultivators murmured among themselves, saying, "Who are these officials who stand between us and the duty laid upon us by the State? Do we not pay the salaries of these men in order that they may order our business and aid us to win the war? Why, then, should we stick this sort of thing any longer? There is a time for digging, and a time for planting, and a time for gathering in the crops, and if the time for digging be spent in all waiting then we can neither plant nor gather in. Get a move on, ye children of Red Tape, or make way for them that will."

But the L.C.C. merely smiled in a superior way, and answered, "It is plain, O! common people, that ye know nothing of the art of government, which is Wait-and-See!"

But Wait-and-See was dead and his successor Do-it-Now reigned in his stead, and when Do-it-Now heard of these things he was wroth, for he cared nothing for Great Bodies but only for the people, and he sent messengers to the L.C.C., saying, "*Get on with your task, and let the people have the land, or . . .*"

The end of this story is not yet written.

Such was the temper of the people towards the L.C.C. as mirrored in the public Press. And that there was good solid reason for it could not for a moment be doubted by any one who has been privileged to watch the internal workings of the astonishing Spring Gardens machine. In a statement issued by the L.C.C. to the London Press early in February, 1917, it was recorded that "the land coming within the terms of the Cultivation of Lands Order would be found not to exceed 500 acres." As 3 of the 28 Metropolitan Boroughs—namely, Wandsworth, Woolwich, and Lambeth (who subsequently received direct powers under the above-named Order as allotment authorities)—within a few weeks placed 386 acres at the disposal of the Society, leaving (according to the L.C.C. estimate) exactly 114 acres of available land among the remaining 25 London Boroughs, or less than 5 acres for each Metropolitan Borough, the accuracy of this astonishing statement may easily be judged. Hundreds of acres were subsequently allotted by Metropolitan Boroughs, which, owing to the studied opposition of the L.C.C., were ultimately given powers as allotment authorities. (See Appendix B.)

Wandsworth was the first Metropolitan Borough to exercise the powers thus delegated by the Board of Agriculture, and from the beginning it has taken the lead. This and other boroughs had also applied to the L.C.C. for land, but had received treatment similar to that meted out to the V.L.C.S. Hence their applications to the Board of Agriculture for direct powers as allotment authorities. By the deliberate inaction of the L.C.C. the work of preparing the land to grow food for the year 1917 was held up from the date of the original Order in Council, December 5, 1916, to January 22, 1917; and,

but for the intervention of the Board of Agriculture, there is no saying how long this delay might have been protracted.

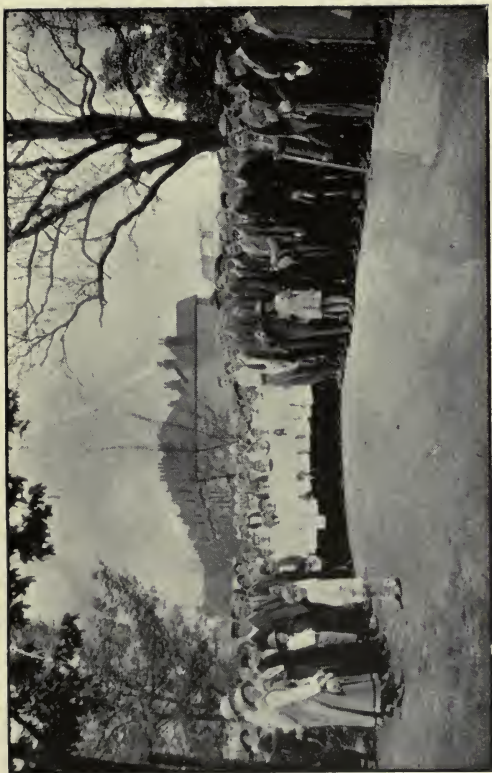
In Dora we have much to be thankful for ; but, like almost every other law intended to benefit the many at the expense of the few, Dora is riddled with loopholes, the worst of which is the absence of any clause making it compulsory upon local allotment authorities to put the intentions of the Act into operation. It is not only the L.C.C. which has obstinately refused to commandeer land as the Board of Agriculture authorized. Numerous other public bodies have taken a similar line, while instances have been brought to our notice where unoccupied land has been let at high rentals to plot-holders and under the very eyes and presumably with the full approval of the public authority entitled by the Act to take possession without first even notifying the owner.

CHAPTER III

" Allotmentitis "—" Harvest " Thanksgivings—Coping with the rush—Voluntary assistance—Lady surveyors—Some reclaiming stories—The building-plot pest—And its extermination.

ONCE under way, the movement for the provision of allotments was swept along on a mighty wave of popular sentiment, and the enthusiasm of the new land-workers developed into a mental fever humorously diagnosed as "allotmentitis." Morning, noon, and night, allotment authorities and local societies were bombarded by those anxious to participate in the great adventure ; and when, by midsummer, it was perceived that the abundant supply of potatoes, cabbages, turnips, salads, peas and beans grown on " war plots " had materially eased the great food crisis, special thanksgiving services were promoted by the churches in various districts on the lines of the old-time rogation services in the open air. The war has produced few spectacles here at home more strange or stirring than these processions—first the clergy and the singing choir, then company after company of plot-holders, bearing their gardening implements in their arms and accompanied by their wives and children. For the first time in her young and stormy life, " Dora " became really popular. Indeed, such popular backing did this revolutionary Order in Council now receive on account of what was, perhaps, its one good deed, that it bade fair to break down every barrier threatening to obstruct its progress. When recalcitrant individuals or procrastinating public bodies, wantonly sacrificing the needs of their own country to the interests of unpatriotic land-owners and speculators, sought to hinder operations, a vast band of unsatisfied applicants for plots thundered, like the famous " River of Progress " :

If you dam up this Order in Council,
At your peril and cost let it be.
That Order will onward, despite you,
'Twill break down your dam and be free,



PLOT-HOLDERS COMBINE WORK WITH WORSHIP. IF PLOT-HOLDERS CAN'T
ATTEND CHURCH THE CHURCH ATTENDS THE PLOT-HOLDERS.

Nevertheless, the supply never came near equalling the demand. Every reference in the Press to the effect that more allotments were to be provided was followed by a huge batch of letters from people anxious to secure possession of a plot. But for one successful candidate there were at least three disappointed grumblers. Within six months of the introduction of the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, the members of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society had risen to 8,000. Thus, while it had taken nine years of strenuous endeavour to find allotments for 800 people, once the land was unlocked ten times this number were accommodated in less than half a year. Much of the land acquired under the Order, in the County of London at any rate, had previously been applied for, in some cases five or six times over; while much more which was now applied for could not, even in the altered circumstances, be obtained, for the simple reason that local authorities were only *permitted*, instead of being *compelled*, to compel landowners to hand over their property, where necessary, for cultivation.

To cope with this unexpected rush, the staff of the London Society had to be immediately enlarged. Each day the post-bag grew heavier. Letters poured in from all parts of the kingdom, and although the activities of the Society were at that time confined principally to the County of London, every request for advice, cultural or otherwise, was given prompt and scrupulous attention. It is interesting to note that a large amount of the work was done by voluntary helpers, who, recognizing the patriotic nature of their employment, strenuously devoted their time either to office routine or to marking out and allotting the new plots. Each week several hundred new plot-holders had to be set up in business, and in every individual case a certain amount of supervision was necessary in order to ensure a successful beginning. Top-coated and heavily booted, armed with spades, land chains, string, and wooden pegs, these devoted workers set forth to "do their bit." The number of plot-holders requisite to tackle a certain piece of land having been selected, these were notified to be present on the site at a stated time and to "bring along a spade and garden

line to mark out your plot." In most cases, each allotment had already been marked out and assigned to its particular individual who, on his name being called, was informed of the number and position of his plot. In this way, large tracts of land were quickly allocated, and in the course of the week-end (the "allotting" always took place on Saturday afternoons) what had for long been hideous patches of waste became alive with eager and industrious throngs, enthusiastically engaged in the initial work of vacant land cultivation.

For the most part the task of measuring and marking out the plots was done by ladies, and great was the curiosity aroused by the unusual and public spectacle of women driving wooden pegs into the ground at measured distances. So impressed was one visitor to Putney by the discovery of this new species of woman war-worker that the following lines were written in commemoration:—

DIANA versus MARS.

Oh, England! do not look to Mars
To bring thee victory in thy wars;
But charge thy guns and raise thy banner,
Trusting rather to Diana.
Not hers thine enemies to kill;
But she thy children's mouths doth fill:
She passes through thy fertile land,
Nor bow, nor arrows in her hand,
Nor hunting-horn—as in the chase;
Hammer and pegs have ta'en their place.
These words she speaks, "V.L.C.S.",
Have power to change a wilderness,
So that it doth with foods abound.
Oh, England! No more barren ground
Shall e'er disgrace thy country-side—
Diana bids such wastes provide
Potatoes plump, and carrots slender,
Parsnips, succulent and tender,
Stout cauliflowers, and portly cabbage,
Gay Brussels sprouts and sombre spinach;
Thus would she help thee keep each day
The German hunger-wolf at bay.

By the end of February, 1917, the enthusiasm of the land cultivators had risen to an unprecedented pitch, and early in March the lengthening evenings, together

with an occasional touch of spring in the air, brought thousands of additional recruits to the ranks of the spade-and-hoe army. In a number of cases the local councils, which had hitherto received the powers of the Cultivation of Lands Order with cool indifference, were now roused into action by the persistent demands of local residents ; while in others most of the available land had been taken over without apparently diminishing the demand made by would-be allotmentees. Meetings were convened in various districts all over the country, and while on the one hand the Government urged the people to secure through their local councils land on which to grow food for the support of the nation, on the other hand in districts where most of the available land had been taken over the local councils were urging the Board of Agriculture to extend their powers.

One of the chief difficulties encountered by those aiming at bringing derelict land into use was the scepticism of landowners, or their agents, and also of public bodies who relied too much on the advice of their technical experts. Thus, application would be made for the temporary loan of a certain piece of land, and the reply would be that "the soil has been tested and found unsuitable." In some cases this may have represented the genuine (though mistaken) opinion of the adviser ; but in the majority of cases it was merely an evasion—a way out of the difficulty. Numerous instances could be given where the worst possible sites have been quickly changed into promising gardens. At Putney application was made for land for which it was necessary first to obtain the sanction of the Board of Agriculture. Consent was refused on the score that the soil was unsuitable for growing crops. Another piece of land was found on which to accommodate a long list of applicants, but so great was the demand in the district at the time that the Board was pressed and, after much delay, prevailed upon to reconsider its decision. The attitude of the Board, however, had created a bad impression in the district and the London Society found itself up against a serious problem. Its own advisers had urged that the land was suitable ; Mr. Prothero's advisers had declared to the contrary. Naturally, the plot-holders

were disheartened and hundreds of previous applicants refused to take up plots. A meeting was called and an attempt made to restore confidence, with the result that a few stalwarts (God bless them !) commenced operations the next day. Some encouragement was necessary for a short while, but within a month the whole of the land—five acres—had been allotted and, in spite of the late start made, the yield of crops the same summer surpassed the most sanguine expectations.

One day in 1915 attention was directed to a most unpromising site near Latchmere Baths, Battersea. The ground was covered with rubbish, in some parts several feet deep. Many years previously it had been used by the local Council as a shoot for the dust carts, until the introduction of a dust destructor enabled this refuse to be disposed of under more sanitary conditions. The Council was approached and the customary delay was caused through the opposition of a few members, who regarded the proposal to grow vegetables on the land in question as sheer madness. Mr. John Burns, the local M.P., had once said that London land was not capable of producing even a consumptive cabbage ; and this statement was recalled by a member of the Council when the matter came up for discussion. Nevertheless, the land was ultimately handed over on January 29, 1916, and volunteers were at once called for to take up plots. About twenty were soon found and a start was made in February. By the first week in March over eighty tons of stones and hard core, all of which was collected in baskets and wheelbarrows by the plot-holders, had been removed from the site. No pecuniary recompense, be it noted, was made or expected for this gigantic task, and even after it was finished the land presented such an unpromising appearance that, as the work of trenching proceeded, critics became more and more numerous and their condemnation of the whole scheme more and more outspoken. On some parts of the site small stones and gravel had accumulated to such an extent that, to get down to the true soil, trenching was necessary to a depth of six and even ten feet. Nevertheless, the workers, in the face of the ridicule of their neighbours, staunchly persevered, and in the course of



A LONDON DESERT TAKEN OVER IN 1915.

It grew magnificent crops the same year.

a few weeks the whole of the land was parcelled into neat, compact and well-dug plots which, by May, were tinged with the fresh green plants and seedlings of vegetables. Since then, the critics have not been heard of—except through their applications for plots when vacancies occur. Here again the venture was an unqualified success, for the plot-holders declare that the first year's produce more than compensated them for their labour.

Numerous instances such as the above might be recorded, for scattered all over the Metropolis there are many similar groups of vegetable gardens which, for many years before the allotmentees took them in hand, had produced nothing but evil ; had contributed not in the smallest degree to the health and happiness of the people ; had given pleasure to no one ; but had simply remained an eyesore to passers-by—an insult to civilization. Experience, in fact, goes to prove that there is practically no such thing in this country as irreclaimable land ; again and again the most unlikely ground has been turned to profitable account by dint of sheer perseverance. "Two years ago," writes one allotmentee, "our plots were the scene of a fair, and a roundabout stood on the bit of land I have been working. When I began to dig, I found the soil rich with iron bolts, sheet iron, brickbats, broken bottles, china, old boots, oyster shells and rags. But I hacked my way through, and now, with winter coming on, I thank God for the abundance He has given me." And here is another illuminating example of what can be done by doggedness, recounted by a plot-holder in the south-west of London : "Owing to the apparently practical impossibility of ever making anything of this plot, I believe two previous holders threw it up as quite unworkable, and when I took it over, which was not until last Easter, I found it to consist of an absolute swamp at the end next the road. About a quarter of its full extent was completely covered with water, varying in depth from three inches to over a foot, whilst the greater part of the remainder was covered with accumulations of builders' rubbish, some of the heaps being over five feet high. I often had nasty remarks thrown at my head as to whether I intended to grow watercress, go in for trout fishing, or let out pleasure-boats on my allotment, so you

can perhaps judge what a terrible fight I have had to make it a practical garden. However, I think I may be excused for saying I feel quite proud of the fact that, in spite of what I have been repeatedly told was an impossibility, by dint of sheer hard work I have conquered its drawbacks. I have trenched all my ground to a depth of 3 to $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and have been rewarded by a splendid crop of turnips, a good supply of potatoes, and fairly decent crops of other vegetables. I may also mention I have grown some good sugar beet, and some of my roots have been sent out to a soldier in France who has a craving for some but wrote that there was none to be obtained in that country. I have a very promising supply of green crops on the land for the winter and spring, and am looking forward to being able to work my allotment next season without such heart-breaking trials and hard labour as I have been through this season."

The change which has been wrought by the allotment-holder on the face of the earth in the Metropolis is little short of a miracle. It has been urged that one of the chief objections to the allotment movement is that it seeks to convert our country, which is likened by Americans to "a great park," into a vast cabbage-patch. This, of course, is very far wide of the mark. On a rough calculation, if every able-bodied man in the United Kingdom were given a 10-rod plot to tend in his spare time, only one ninety-sixth of the total area of these islands would be under cultivation by allotments. While, in actual practice, what the allotment-holder has really accomplished has been to beautify, not to deface. Before the winter of 1916-17, every urban district was scarred with patches of waste land, plots which had degenerated into blots, unlovely in aspect, demoralizing in effect, and menacing to the health of the people of the neighbourhood. Strewn with filth and rubbish, a general depository for refuse of every description, the absence of fencing providing access for children by day and loafers by night, the typical building site presented a grave indictment of our atrocious "land system." It was usual for such places to be frequented on Sundays by youths and men playing football or pitch-and-toss, while it was quite common for them to become

clubhouses, as it were, of rowdyism, with resultant manifestations which formed a constant source of annoyance to those living near. In a number of cases known to us where land of this description adjoined workshops or factories, it was practically impossible, owing to the causes mentioned, to keep a pane of glass unbroken. And meanwhile the land produced nothing—not even rates—though in nine cases out of ten it was capable of yielding, at pre-war retail prices, wholesome food to the value of £80 an acre.

Now these sores are in process of being healed. The unsightly, unhealthy, uncared-for building plot has become a trim, neat, well-cropped vegetable garden. It is no longer a plague-spot to be shunned but a centre of attraction to be visited. A novelty in sight-seeing has, indeed, been provided, for visitors to the plots are more numerous even than the plot-holders themselves, who, men, women, and children alike, may be observed every day and evening in the summer busily and happily engaged in a task beneficial to themselves and to their fellow-men.

Small wonder that public opinion is backing the demands of the allotment-holder !

CHAPTER IV

Types of allotment-holders—The four men of Islington—Women plot-holders—The children—"Untrainables"—The story of Joseph—An expert view.

ONE of the most striking features of the recent allotment movement is the democratic influence which it has exercised upon the minds of the people. For illustration, we need only turn to the many types of allotmentees who so readily and enthusiastically enlisted when the great new land army was recruited. Although the great majority consisted, naturally, of working men, practically every grade in the social scale was represented. Doctors, parsons, shopkeepers, policemen, postmen, engineers, electricians, journalists, civil servants, clerks, people of independent means, labourers of every class—all sorts and conditions of human beings immediately and unhesitatingly responded to the call of the land.

To thousands of these, work on the land came with as much novelty as did soldiering to the raw material of Kitchener's Army; some—and this is no exaggeration—could not tell a hoe from a swaphook, or a bed of turnips from a bed of beets; but the irresistible attraction of the soil magnetized them into action, and the multitudinous and complicated problems presented by tillage to the lay mind left them undaunted and undismayed. True patriotism, no doubt, induced many to take up the arduous and, occasionally, disconcerting task of cultivating an allotment, but, while the motives of nearly all war-time allotmentees were prompted in part by a patriotic impulse, there is indisputable evidence to show that the movement which seeks to place amateurs in possession of land was really animated and made possible by the awakening of a long-latent land-hunger in the hearts of the people.

In this connection, we may cite the case of a doctor with a large and responsible practice, who wrote saying that he was prepared to travel up to three miles if an allot-

ment could not be found for him close to his residence in the heart of a congested south-east metropolitan district. It would be absurd to imagine that this man could have had any qualms of conscience as to whether his own work was of "national importance." It would be ridiculous to contend that he desired to take up an allotment expressly because he felt it to be his patriotic duty to "do his bit." Nor could it reasonably be asserted that his object was the purely selfish one of augmenting his income by growing his own food, instead of buying it. No! The root of the matter was simply this: that, as a human being unnaturally separated from the land, he felt subconsciously that nothing, save actual contact with it, could give him that indefinable sensation of satisfaction and restful contentment which the union of man and land alone can bring.

In the Borough of Islington, within a few yards of Pentonville Prison, a small piece of land was recently allotted to four men, none of whom had previously had any experience of gardening. The soil was not more than two feet deep in the best part, and was of a bad gravelly nature. A brick wall surrounded the enclosure, and in summer the broiling heat of the sun and the odour from an adjoining tripe factory combined to create an almost intolerable atmosphere. The soil—what there was of it—formed a covering for a railway tunnel—a circumstance which in times of drought did not improve matters. As, however, in hundreds of similarly difficult cases, success was achieved in the face of all obstacles. The results were what a journalist would term miraculous, and the vegetables which were produced could not have been improved upon in any country cottage garden. How staunchly these men worked! How great was their wonder and delight when the tiny seeds germinated, and, as the weeks went by, luxurious vegetation overspread that one-time desert of a place! There are those who might rub their eyes in astonishment at the picture of these men kneeling to thank the Creator for the wonderful things which spring, at the bidding of an unseen Power, from the tiny seeds in the dead grey earth; but surely the companion picture of these men, poor, ill-clad, cut off from

the main chance of human happiness, living and working, day in, day out, in dull uninteresting surroundings, passing uncomplainingly from monotony to monotony—surely that is a picture far more astonishing and incredible !

On a day in April, when the fair tender threads of the plants were pushing up through the moist earth, the four plot-holders were seen to be congregated in one corner of the site near to the wall, against which a small tool-shed had been erected. An intensely heated argument was in progress. Each of the four protested that he had put no seed “in there” (pointing in amazement to a pair of green heart-shaped leaves supported by a sturdy twirling stem). Yet some one had planted the seed, that was beyond question. Each day, as opportunity occurred, the men would assemble around the little plant, to report progress. Little by little, but more and more vigorously, it grew, and horny hands tenderly supported the climbing miracle with pieces of twine stretched carefully between nails driven into the wall. No plant in the King’s garden ever received more care and attention, none in the wide world was ever more admired. And yet—it was only a little common convolvulus ; a tramp of the country hedgerow !

One day, later on in the summer, the manager of the adjoining tripe factory asked permission to carry a five-ton boiler across the allotments. At first, when the plot-holders were approached on the matter, they refused permission, but when it was pointed out to them that it would be impossible otherwise to convey the new boiler to its place in the factory, they reluctantly consented. The proprietors of the factory offered ample compensation for any damage or inconvenience caused ; but this was small consolation to the men, who, although in poor circumstances, definitely and repeatedly declared that nothing in the way of cash could possibly compensate for the crops raised by them under such novel conditions. It was the crops they wanted ; and, to their minds, the value of these could not be estimated in mere terms of money.

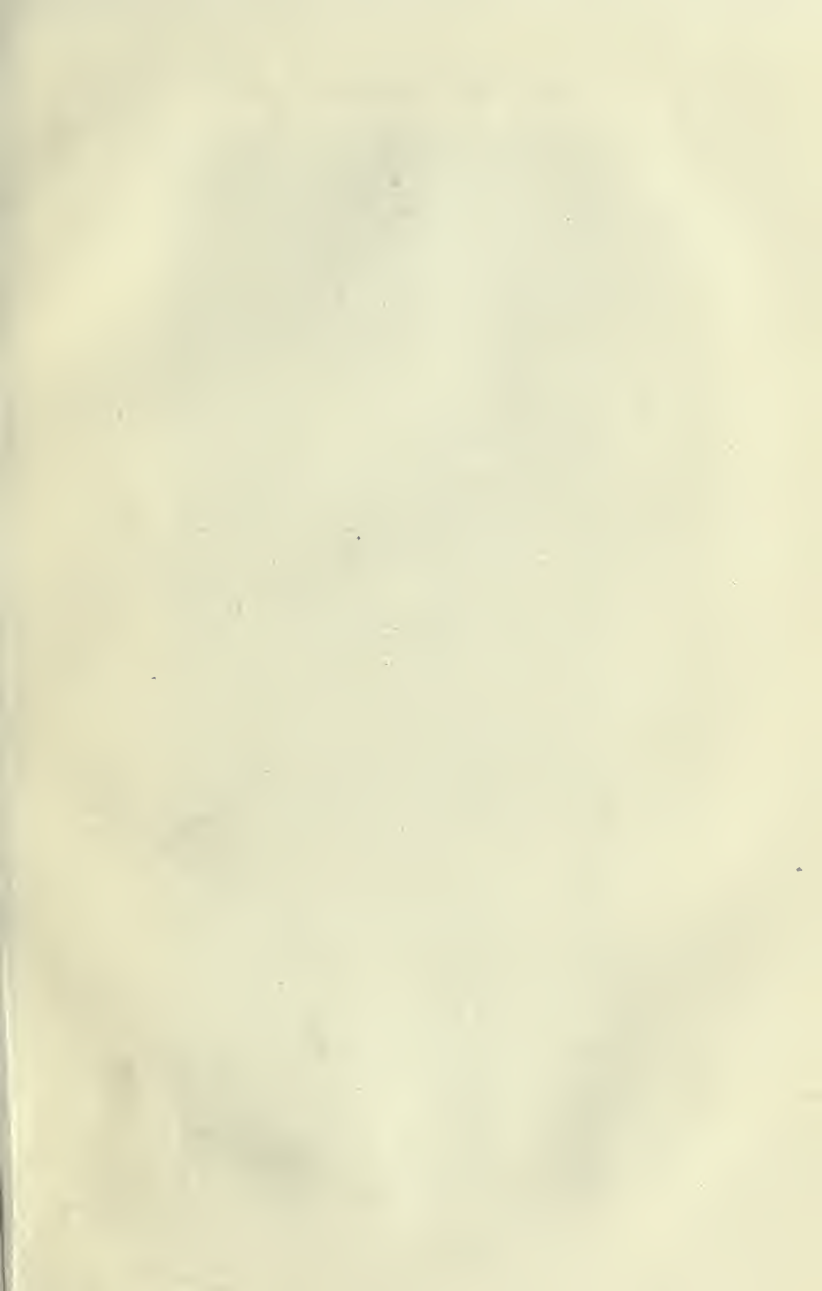
Few who are not in close touch with the allotment movement understand how tightly it has gripped the imagination, and awakened the desire of the people.

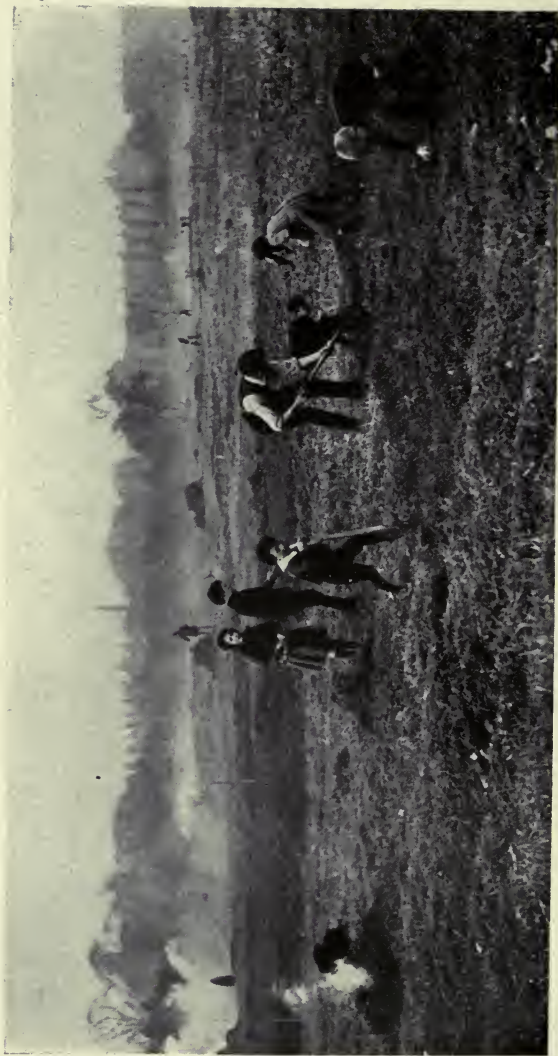
Old and young, rich and poor, women as well as men, feel keenly the need for land; some, to augment their income; some, as a hobby and recreation; some, for reasons of health; some, because they believe it to be their patriotic duty to assist in raising the home-grown food supply. But these considerations are, every one of them, subsidiary. The roots of the matter lie far deeper. Primarily, one and all have been attracted by this opportunity to get in touch with the land, to handle it, to work it, to exploit its resources, to probe and solve its mysteries, to experience that unknown sensation of sympathy which draws the two together as a magnet. Women in great numbers have heard and answered the irresistible call of the land, and, in numerous instances, have overcome their initial difficulties with the same ease and composure as have the men. The wives of soldiers, especially have proved successful cultivators, entering into the movement with commendable ardour, and demonstrating by their skilful manipulation of the gardening tools that they are worthy mates of their men across the seas. In many cases, no doubt, this enthusiasm is due to their anxiety to preserve the same high standard of cultivation previously maintained by their husbands before they were called up. It is a common sight, as we have pointed out, to see husband and wife and children working together on the family allotment; and this preliminary schooling accounts very largely for the great store of knowledge possessed by many of the married women who are growing crops in their husbands' absence.

But there are instances on record, too, of women who have never previously engaged in manual labour of any kind, who have yet succeeded splendidly with their work on garden plots. We have especially in mind an elderly spinster of frail physique, who applied for an allotment. This was before the great back-to-the-land movement when the demand was still lukewarm. As the land for which the good lady asked was situated in a north-western suburb, noted for the stiff clayey character of its soil, it was considered practically impossible that she should ever contrive to grow crops successfully—especially as the land in question was carrying a heavy crop of long,

coarse grass which had for many years been left undisturbed. A reply was therefore sent advising her not to embark on the attempt; and there the matter was considered at an end. Not so. On the following morning, Miss — put in an appearance at the London Society's offices and demanded to know on what grounds her application had been refused. There were three other women sharing her flat and, as a teacher of art needlework, she alone of the four was able to bring grist to the mill. A plot of land would be a very timely help. The difficulties besetting the proposed undertaking were again impressed upon her, but she remained adamant, asserting that if the Society pretended to be impartial in the allocation of the plots, there was no earthly reason why she, a woman, should be denied the pleasure and advantage of cultivating an allotment also. Eventually it was agreed that she should have a trial, and she became one of a group of over 120 all of whom, with this single exception, were men. At first her efforts were received by her fellow-plot-holders with some amusement and a good deal of disapproval; but, nothing dismayed, and rejecting with scorn repeated offers of help from the men, this amazon of the soil persisted diligently and methodically in the heavy task of trenching. This was nearly three years ago, and she is still the proud possessor of a well-regulated and skilfully kept plot.

For the average woman, no doubt, such gardening operations as digging and trenching, wheeling manure and so on are too laborious, but the lighter and more interesting work in the summer months affords not only admirable physical exercise, but mentally health-giving relaxation from the tiresome, monotonous routine of domestic duties. It is illuminating to witness the joyful anticipation of the women and children when, for example, the potato crop is lifted. "See me on a Sunday morning," to cite the picture drawn by one plot-holder of himself, "shelling peas—my own growing—sitting on mother's upturned bucket, pipe alight, the missus jumping for joy, kids laughing, dog wagging his tail like a leaf in a gale. . . ." Oh! it's a great adventure! You must delve deep into the psychology of the plot-holder's mind before you can





PLOT-HOLDERS AND CHILDREN AT WORK.

fathom the intensity and immensity of the effect exercised upon his life and well-being by the simple possession of an allotment.

No section of the community has enjoyed the health-giving benefits bestowed by the allotment movement more than the children—and, after all, if the provision of allotments did nothing more than this, the campaign for security of tenure would be amply justified. Out of school hours, "daddy's plot" has been one of the most frequent topics of conversation, and what with school gardens and the general display of juvenile enthusiasm, many teachers have thought it well to include in their curriculum of lessons a few hours' instruction every week on specially acquired land. On fine days, and especially on Saturday afternoons, allotments in towns swarm with children "helping daddy"; and it is almost superfluous to mention that, occupied in the useful task of, say, weeding the plot, the children are very considerably improved both physically and mentally. It was and still is a common sight in districts where there are no allotments to see hundreds of children, boys and girls, scampering about the highways amid the traffic of the roads, committing all kinds of nuisances to themselves and others—while their parents are—for the most part—no better employed. But if they were only put in touch with the land, if they were only encouraged and taught to grow part of their own food, who can doubt but that they would be of more value to themselves and to their fellows? It is certain that children who are occupied in their own spare hours under the supervision of their parents will grow to be far more valued citizens than can possibly be the case with those who are left to roam the streets uncared for, unprotected, and uninitiated into the mysteries and wonders of nature.

"Ah! yes," we hear the reader saying, "that is all very well, . . . but what about the failures? I grant that, to some people an allotment may be an inestimable boon. But there must be many more whose work is thrown away, and who might be profitably employed otherwise. Most men of forty cannot suddenly turn themselves into expert vegetable growers any more than they can suddenly board a railway engine and pilot it successfully to its destination. You don't mention the untrainables."

To that we would reply that we do not mention the failures because numerically they are not worth mentioning.

The records of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society, compiled before the war at a time when plot-holders were mainly composed of what is called the "submerged tenth," show that only 5 per cent. were untrainable. Now that allotments are cultivated by all classes, of which keen intellectual workmen—able more readily to grasp the essential details—form the bulk, it is safe to assume that the percentage of untrainable men and women has been reduced to an almost negligible quantity. The readiness with which the recruit to allotment work surmounts the difficulties and solves the mysteries of gardening would amaze one not conversant with the type of individual who usually aspires to possess and cultivate a plot of land. The great majority take to the land with the same ease and confidence with which a fledgling duck takes to the water. The land fascinates and the multitudinous tasks charm him, and never is the work too laborious, never are the intricacies too bewildering for him to try hard and patiently to overcome them all. Doubtless this in certain measure is due to the relaxation which gardening affords from the wearisome toil of the workers' calling. However that may be, almost without exception the allotment-holder in the embryo is a willing and patient pupil, and with the help and encouragement of his fellows, the essentials of gardening are quickly grasped and mastered. After the first season on the land, there are no doubts in his mind as to his ability to succeed. It is probable that two-thirds of the war-time allotment-holders have never previously seriously handled a spade, and yet the enormous number of allotment fields which have sprung into being during the past few months bear witness to the splendid results achieved by novices. Even in the very few instances in which it is impossible to awaken the interest of the plot-holder, it will generally be found that outside influences were responsible for the failure. We have specially in mind the case of one Joseph —, who for close on fifteen years had worked as a labourer in a south-east London brewery. A couple of acres of a disused building site were secured within a few hundred yards of the brewery,

and old foundations to a depth of many feet had to be removed before the business of sowing and planting could commence. Joseph — was among the first batch of applicants for plots and started his task full of hope and enthusiasm. Tools were provided and every assistance afforded. For a few weeks all went well. Then Joseph suddenly disappeared, and his plot was forsaken. Enquiries being made, it was discovered that he had revived an old bad habit, and taken heavily to drink. As he could not be persuaded to return, his plot was handed to another applicant; but it was not long before he called at the Society's offices and, promising that if another plot could be found for him, he would stick to his job, voluntarily pledged himself to refrain from his old enemy, drink. Nothing could be offered then, and Joe went away after a further appeal, saying that he wanted to overcome the craving for drink, and that he knew an allotment garden—more than any other counter-attraction—would help him to accomplish this successfully. On the following day there arrived this letter from his wife:—

I am righting to ask whether you will give my husband a peace of land not to far of here. My husband is upset becas you have got no plots for him. He wants to giv up the beer but cant and if you will giv him a plot i no he will giv up the drink. I have fore children and a cripple and my husband to keep and so if I could have his wages insted of him paying it for drink we could be comferble. Please try and giv him an allotment as we used to have a garden when (before ?) we came to London.

In a short time the much-needed plot was provided, and, saving for one or two lapses, has received fairly good attention ever since.

That some are more successful than others in growing crops is, inevitably, true, but the total failures are very few indeed. Numerous striking instances could be given of men and women, entire strangers to gardening, who have obtained really marvellous results in face of the greatest difficulties.

The Editor of *Country Life* (Sept. 29, 1917, p. 293) in commenting on the success of the war-time allotment-holders says:—

“ It is impossible for those who are responsible for the

agricultural policy of Great Britain to neglect the eloquent lesson to be derived from the success of the allotment-holders. Concerning it, there is no room for doubt. Exact figures are not available any more than they are for the results achieved on the big farms, but any one who uses his eyes can see that fine crops have been made to grow on the most unlikely places. I confess to having been a little sceptical myself. During the early months of the year, it happened that I had several times a week to pass along a road that passes a town waste. A less promising piece of ground could not well have been imagined. Some land speculator had purchased it for building purposes in days anterior to the famous Budget which effectually checked that form of enterprise. Part was a dumping ground for tins and household rubbish; on another part boys, with or without leave, played football, but that came to an end when war broke out. Couch grass and other foul weeds took advantage of the vacancy. So the conditions remained until the spring of this year, when a feeble old man, looking quite past work, began digging. He was followed by others equally grey and feeble, some even halt and blind. But it was evident that they knew something of tillage. They worked industriously and not without a touch of that neatness which characterizes the English cottage gardener. Occasionally they had some assistance from very young children; mills and factories engaged in war work had absorbed the elder boys and girls. Who could have expected the earth to yield up her treasures of food to patriarchs and babies? Yet it was so. They were very poor and received no help. But this was an advantage from our point of view, as the cultivators were thrown entirely on their own resources. It was obvious that they had no money to spend on artificial manures. But a great road passes close to the vacant plot, and even in these days of decreased traffic there were enough horses to yield a liberal supply of droppings. Old and young sallied out, whenever the conditions were favourable, with vessels of all sorts—pitchers, a wheelbarrow, an old perambulator, anything that would serve their purpose—and assiduously gathered the refuse of the road. There

were also heaps of sweepings composed miscellaneously of grit, decayed dung, and a substance which the roadman scattered before applying the steam roller. It looks like a rather poor kind of basic slag, but the men are very fully convinced of its virtues. One of them told me recently that his winter cabbage plants were in process of being devoured by insects, so he begged a few handfuls of this powder and scattered it over the plot where they were growing. Whether or not the result was due to that act, it is impossible from a casual glance to say, but my own eyes bear witness to the fact that the plants are now growing splendidly, with none of the perforations which previously attested to the presence of garden pests of one kind or another. At the present moment those plots which formed a wilderness in the early months of the year are covered with vegetables for the winter. The Brussels Sprouts, which seem to be the favourites, would not discredit the best garden. They are strong, high, sturdy plants, already showing plenty of buttons. Beet seems to come next in that district, and there is an abundance of it still growing. Leeks, too, have been planted, and this is a sign of the advance due to the war. In that part of the country the Leek, up to now, has been neglected, and generally spoken of as a Welsh or Scotch kind of Onion. But horticultural education has been getting so far down that it has reached even these humble growers. They showed with pride a very promising crop. It had been put in late, and the plants are not up to show standards, but they will certainly furnish a large supply of nutritious food in the dreary winter months when living is most difficult to the poor. I mention this instance because it came accidentally to my notice. It is typical, however, of what has been accomplished in thousands of places throughout the country, and especially in London and its neighbourhood.

“The assumption on which a national policy of agriculture is based seems to be that the food supply of the country depends chiefly on the large cultivators. One is not prepared to say that there is no truth in this. The five-hundred acre farm must yield a greater absolute percentage of the food supply than the little plots. Still,

that is not all the truth. What has been proved beyond question is that in intensive cultivation lies the way to make Great Britain independent of foreign supplies of food. Some remarkable instances can be given to show how this works out practically. For example, a man who had cultivated forty rods of land, when he set about it was able to produce as much from twenty rods as he had done from forty rods.

"The scarcity of labour is held to make extensive cultivation necessary. It is said, too, that the land is too thin and poor to make thorough cultivation profitable. Experience is, at any rate, rapidly playing havoc with the latter of these contentions. It shows that where there is the requisite depth of soil, there is a possibility of obtaining heavy crops. All that is required is more work on the land, more manure, and more scientific understanding of the soil.

"But the retort will be that the ancients and the children who have been responsible for gardening waste plots are absolutely ignorant of science. That cannot be denied except in so far that those who have been most successful may not have read books but have obtained a practical knowledge from working the land. As far as a limited enquiry can justify one in speaking, the old men who have got very good results seem without exception, whatever their recent employment has been, to have at one time or another worked on the land. It was very easy to see in the case of those to which particular reference was made that they handled the spade as it is handled only by those to whom it is a familiar tool.

"It is surprising that in a country like this there should be in all classes of society numbers who have simply obtained their vegetables from the greengrocer and, before the war started, had not the glimmering of an idea how they were made to grow."

Surprising indeed! But the anomaly is in process of extinction, and the day at hand when the whole nation will unite in practical recognition of the truth that spades are trumps.

CHAPTER V

Social advantages of the allotment movement—Mutual assistance
—The new vision—Lectures—Literature, good and bad—
Personal instruction.

By bringing together numbers of people sharing the same interests, aims, and ideas, the allotment movement has performed a social service the value of which it would be difficult to over-estimate. The way in which friendly relations are established and cemented between neighbours working on the land is, to say the least of it, striking. As a nation we do not mix easily, either with other nations or even with ourselves. And this is especially true of the dwellers in our big cities. The countryman coming to town is often amazed to find that his town cousin rarely knows even his neighbour's name. One would think that people living in the same street of a modern suburb had nothing whatever in common, so rarely are they even on nodding terms with one another. Indeed, in many cases we go to great pains to avoid getting to know our neighbours, for fear lest we should be put to the inconvenience of common courtesy. It is to be hoped that the change wrought in this extraordinary mood as a result of the allotment movement is significant of a coming order of things, when human beings will learn and understand (as do lesser animals) that as individuals they are miserably incompetent and inefficient in all their undertakings and that the spirit of co-operation is nearly akin to the spirit of Christianity.

During the past year the writer has attended and addressed scores of meetings, called together for the purpose of forming local allotment societies and of electing officers to manage their affairs. These initial meetings are nearly always a terrible fiasco. After explaining the purpose of the gathering, the chairman asks those present to nominate, say, a local secretary. Nominations are not forthcoming. The chairman repeats his request.

"Gentlemen, I have to ask you to nominate one of yourselves to act on your behalf as secretary. Now then, names, please!" A shifty, sleepy look settles upon the countenances of all assembled. Each glances shyly and surreptitiously in the direction of his neighbour, but for some time the silence remains beautifully undisturbed. At last one brave spirit rises shamefacedly to his feet. "Mr. Chairman," he explains, crimsoning as he speaks, "I am sorry to say that, though most of us live in adjoining houses, we don't happen to know each other. We can't nominate candidates if we don't even know one another's names." What a confession! What a disaster! Then, either the chairman asks for some one to volunteer to fill the vacant post, or one of the meeting suggests that "That gentleman there at the end of the third row be asked to serve. I know him all right by sight—he's our special constable."

But always there is sufficient local initiative to overcome these unnatural obstacles, and a society is formed. Meetings are then held regularly, fortnightly or monthly, and soon the whole body of members begins to reap the advantages of association. It is discovered that neighbours, after all, are not as bad as they have been painted. A spirit of comradely goodwill establishes itself, the meetings are enlivened by keen discussion of matters affecting common interests, and good-natured rivalry in matters of gardening springs up between the members. Many societies encourage this healthy spirit of competition by holding exhibitions at the place of meeting. A schedule is drawn up at the beginning of the season and each month the members are invited to exhibit for competition one or two kinds of seasonable vegetables. The successful exhibitors are then invited to make known the methods employed in growing the prize-winning crops. Nothing is considered worse form than for an allotmentee to withhold from his friends any secret of cultivation of which he may be possessed; and very rarely does it happen that an individual chooses to stand aloof from his fellows. To help one another is the very *raison d'être* of association in the allotment movement. The interests of each are bound up with all, and the greater the numbers



NATIONAL ASSETS—LITTLE BOYS AND BIG POTATOES, SUMMER, 1917.

and the closer the organization, the better for everybody concerned—not only in regard to such questions as co-operative purchase of seeds, fertilizers, and other allotment requisites, but in regard to matters of mutual protection and cultural perfection.

For illustration of this we need only recall the way in which allotment societies have again and again fulfilled a function similar to that of insurance or benefit organizations. We know of cases in which, owing to unforeseen or unforeseeable circumstances—such as flooding after heavy storms, or sheer bad luck—a holder on a group of allotments has lost the major portion of his crops. What has happened? His mates have at once taken the matter up and rectified the misfortune by a whip-round at a meeting or by a specially organized concert. That is the kind of neighbourly regard which is being nurtured by the allotment movement, that is the kind of guarantee which co-operation bestows. A plot-holder meets with an accident, falls ill, is compelled to leave the district for a time. Unless help is immediately forthcoming, a well-kept plot will fall into ruin. It is in the interests of the unlucky holder, *and it is in the interests of the society to which he belongs*, that the plot should be kept in good order. And this is done. Without hesitation and without question, the committee arranges for the work to go on. It is understood that where a plot-holder is called to serve in the Army or Navy or Air Service, the welfare of his family shall be left in the keeping of his fellows. Where the wife is able herself to carry on the work, she does all that she is able to, but in most cases her onerous duties keep her at home in the evenings, when her ordinary day's work is done, looking after the children, putting them to bed—and keeping them there. And never is she allowed to suffer. Volunteers come forward in excess of the numbers requisite, and as a result of their willing efforts many a soldier's family in this war has been supplied with an abundance of fresh vegetables and salads through the generous efforts of allotment workers.

Among the many subjects discussed at plot-holders' meetings is one with which we shall deal more fully in

a later chapter, but which deserves a passing mention here. The interest created by allotments reaches far beyond the confines of the 10-rod plot; for once a man is brought into direct contact with the land, a new vision immediately opens before him and he begins to think about many things that really matter. Like a small child, he sets to asking questions which, at first, he cannot answer. "Whence comes all that I depend on for life—the food I eat, the clothes I wear, the house in which I live?" The earth, he remembers, is the mother of us all, and verily she is a bounteous mother; and then, pursuing this line of thought, he begins to wonder: "How comes it that land, on which all depend, is withheld from the people and that its resources are left unexploited for the good of all? Why this yoke of monopoly which is strangling the efforts of the people to live free and natural lives? Do I belong to my country, or does my country belong to me, or both or neither?" The practical answer to these questions will surely be furnished by those same millions of people from whose brains they emanate. It will be strange, indeed, if Dora, which aims at bridling the laws of freedom, should ultimately prove to be the precursor of freedom, of a fuller life, of a more natural existence. But whether or no that will ever come to pass, this much is certain: that Dora has brought more recruits to the already powerful army of land reformers than has any other known factor. It is inevitable that once a man has experienced the pangs of what we have called land-hunger, he will prove himself a force to be reckoned with. These and many similar questions are discussed at plot-holders' meetings, and thus the allotmentee is educated politically as well as socially and technically. Not that such meetings ever degenerate into contentious political debates. Politics, *qua* politics, are ruled rigidly out of court, and rightly so, where men and women of all shades of political opinion and social standing are convened. But, since it affects the interests of all who care for the well-being of their country, land reform is regarded as outside this pale, and discussion is consequently admitted.

Another subject which commonly comes under dis-

cussion is the best means of getting skilled instruction in the art to which so many are new. In recent years there has been a tremendous increase in the demand for lectures and addresses on every conceivable subject under the sun, from Renaissance Architecture and Polar Exploration to Guild Socialism and the Truth about the War; and this development has not escaped the attention of those interested in the cultivation of the land. Every allotment-holder is anxious to grow better crops than his neighbour, and with this end in view he is invariably ready to take advantage of any opportunity that may present itself in the shape of gardening lectures by professional men. These lectures range over a very wide field of subjects—crops, soil, manures, cultivation, weather, a smattering of chemistry and botany, and so on; and the more they are encouraged and the better they are attended, the greater is the improvement noticeable in the crops grown, both as regards quality and quantity. In some districts the local councils provide a certain number of lectures at a small cost, and latterly the Government Food Production Department has arranged for lectures to be given over a wide area throughout the country; but the need for real organization in this direction is still very acute. Through the Board of Agriculture, whose business it was and is to extend the facilities for furnishing our home-grown food supply, a vast acreage of hitherto unused land is being made to produce millions of tons of additional food; but the importance of arranging for instruction to be given to the new army of food producers does not appear to be fully appreciated—or, if it is, certainly no comprehensive scheme has yet been devised and put into operation.

Lectures, of course, are not the only form of instruction for which allotmentees are clamouring. The demand for gardening literature of the right kind—and often, unhappily, of the wrong kind!—is also phenomenal, and much of the information thus imparted has undoubtedly been of considerable assistance.¹

¹ The growth of this demand is well illustrated by the following figures, showing the monthly rise in the circulation of the journal which began its existence under the title of *Vacant Lots* in

There has been a great "rush" on the leaflets issued by the Board of Agriculture. But it is highly questionable whether many of the pocket-encyclopædias of cultural instruction which have been hurriedly compiled and flung on to the market are really of much use to the allotmentee. Often, they only tend to depress and discourage him. Most handbooks on gardening, for example, "kick off" with some such advice as that "The site selected should be exposed to the sun during the greater part of the day, and, at the same time, be sheltered from the north and east. The ground should slope to the south-west." Or, in dealing with the condition of the soil, the following is the instruction given: "The soil should consist of medium loam, well drained and not less than two feet in depth." Or, again: "Good, well-rotted farmyard manure should be incorporated with the soil." And so on. Is it surprising that the learner should be bewildered by the stipulation of such phenomenal conditions? Thousands of successful holders have never seen the type of manure and soil which they are told is *necessary*. The modern plot-holder, however, is in most cases built to overcome all difficulties and is not to be dissuaded from his task by the awesome admonitions of the so-called expert. Conditions must be accepted as they are found, and if the true soil cannot be discovered on the surface, well, then it will probably be found somewhere underneath. If the proper kinds of manure cannot be obtained, then a substitute must be found. If the land slopes to the north instead of to the south, never mind, the crops can be made to grow all the same. "He who wills the end wills the means." That is the motto of the gallant

November, 1916, and subsequently became, in January, 1918, the official organ of the National Union of Allotment Holders under the name of *Allotments and Gardens* :—

November 1916 . . .	2,000	July 1917 . . .	6,500
December " . . .	2,500	August " . . .	6,500
January 1917 . . .	4,000	September 1917 . . .	7,000
February " . . .	4,000	October " . . .	8,000
March " . . .	5,000	November " . . .	10,000
April " . . .	5,000	December " . . .	12,000
May (Annual Report) .	7,000	January 1918 . . .	25,000
June " . . .	6,000	March " . . .	30,000

new land army, and it is this admirable spirit of enterprise and resource which has done more than anything else to enable our warriors of the soil to overcome so many seemingly insuperable difficulties. In issuing general advice to the novice, it is absurd to explain in detail a particular kind of treatment and a particular method of working. Each kind of soil requires its own special treatment—although, of course, certain well-defined basic principles may safely be laid down. Once inspire the novice with a realization of the elastic possibilities of the soil, once imbue him with a determination to succeed, once create in him a keen desire to learn the wisdom of Mother Earth, and the battle, despite "impossible" soils and conditions, is won.

It is here that the assistance of the personal instructor should be called in. Just as there should be State lectures, so there should be State instructors, who not only attend plot-holders' meetings (from which they would learn a thing or two worth reporting back to headquarters!), but who also periodically visit and inspect allotments, each within his prescribed area. No matter how exhaustive a syllabus of lectures on gardening may be, it can never be so helpful to the tyro as personal supervision while he is actually at work. By such means, and by such means only, the countless little problems which harass and perplex the beginner can be surely solved upon the spot, and the beginner can then go forward "on his own," untroubled by the nightmare that the foundations on which he is attempting to erect his edifice may have been unsoundly laid.

CHAPTER VI

Intensive culture—The ten-rod plot—*£. s. d.* of allotments—Crops chiefly grown—Surplus produce.

IT is to intensive culture that the efforts of allotment-holders are directed. There is not, nor can there ever be, any comparison between the small land cultivator and the large farmer. Far more labour is put into the land by the allotment-holder than by the farmer. The latter adopts a system which is based on the minimum of labour, while the former wrestles with each and every square foot of soil over the entire area of his holding. Moreover, hand tillage is known to be very much more effective than that performed by means of machinery or mechanical implements worked by indirect power, such as horses or petrol. Again, the operations in agriculture utilize the soil to a depth of only a few inches, while horticulture aims at exploiting the life-giving power of the soil to a depth of two or three feet. The man with the spade delves deeply because he knows that, wherever he strikes, the roots of the succeeding crops will ramify in search of hidden wealth.

The soil of an allotment never ceases to work on behalf of mankind; it is cropped and intercropped almost without ceasing, and when it is lying fallow, the holder diligently labours to revive its fertility in order that future crops may grow to perfection. The methods adopted by the French smallholder are not so much a system of intensive cultivation as forced cropping. The allotment-holder does not force his crops—or, at any rate, does so only in a very slight degree; what he does do, however, is to make use of the best-known methods of cultivation to secure from all available sources the greatest possible bulk of food. By means of intercropping he is able to lay his plans so as to grow two or three crops

on the same patch at one and the same time, with striking results.

What is the ideal size for a one-man plot? Experience places the answer at ten rods. The ten-rod plot is essentially manageable. You can keep your eye on it all the time, it does not provide more work than the average man can cope with in his spare hours. At the same time, however, the smallness of its dimensions will not allow of a condition of under-cultivation if the holder is to provide for his requirements without having recourse to the greengrocer. It may seem, it undoubtedly is, unfortunate for this latter individual that the aim of the allotmentee should be to dispense altogether with shop-bought vegetables and salads; but the greatest good of the greatest number is an unanswerable maxim. Can the allotmentee provide for the needs of his own family with such a small area as one-sixteenth of an acre? We say, emphatically, that he can. By some authorities, we know, it is held that the ten-rod plot is too small to ensure a sufficiency of supplies for an average family all the year round; but, except where the family is an unusually large one and grown-up sons and daughters with particularly healthy appetites have to be fed, we have seldom heard it stated by allotment-holders themselves that this area is insufficient for their requirements. That is practical evidence, not mere theoretical conjecture.

Ten square rods of land should, however, be taken as the irreducible minimum, and where land is available and spare time fairly generous, this area might very well be increased to twelve or even fifteen square rods. But beyond that it would be unwise for the spare-time allotment worker to venture single-handed. Our experience with the twenty-rod plot-holder has been that he is unable to obtain as great a bulk of crops as the holder of a much smaller patch, and for this reason: that the larger plot is too much for him to manage and, weeds, rubbish, etc., obtaining an upper hand, crops are consequently not so well grown. Shortage of money, too, when it is most needed for expenditure on seeds, manures, and other necessities is probably another frequent cause of failure in these cases.

ALLOTMENTS FOR ALL

A question we are often asked by intending allotmentees is, What return, in terms of £ s. d., am I likely to get for my labour? Putting aside the benefits I shall receive in the way of pleasure and better health and the rest of it, will the game really be worth the candle? This question is best answered concretely, in figures. During the year 1915, systematic valuations of the crops raised on the London Society's allotments were made in order to arrive at the approximate money value. Specially printed sheets were used, and points awarded for quality, at inspections made in June, August, and October. The actual cash value to the cultivators was thus ascertained. As a result of this valuation, which was based on *pre-war* retail prices, it was shown that from 262 plots, worked throughout the year, the value of foodstuffs produced was £1,810 4s., or approximately £78 9s. per acre—a result, considering the nature of much of the land and other conditions, highly encouraging and satisfactory.

The following is a list of groups of allotments valued, their respective areas, number of plots tested on each group, and the value of crops grown:—

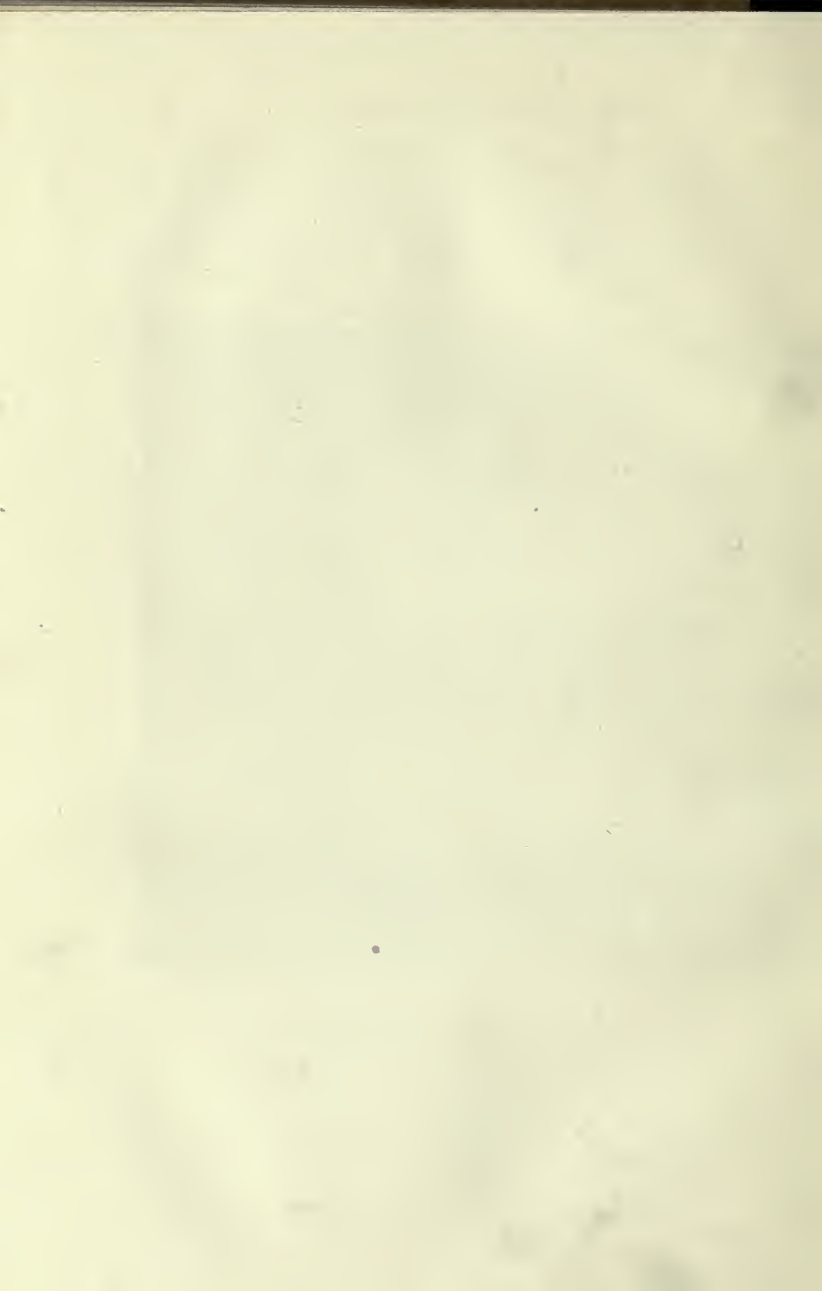
	Area (Rods).	Value.	Number of Plots.	Average Size of Plots (Rods).
		£ s. d.		
Fulham (Townmead Road) ..	908	491 10 5	53	20
Southfields ¹ (Camborne Road)	559	310 15 2	49	10
Hampstead (old group) ..	728	277 16 1	33	20
Leytonstone	309	142 6 0	24	10
East Ham ¹	231	125 7 4	21	10
Brockley ¹	280	123 17 7	28	10
Fulham (New King's Road) ..	156	105 13 0	13	10
Hampstead ¹ (new group) ..	213	90 18 4	18	10
Tooting	160	74 17 6	8	20
Fulham (High Street) ..	98	49 11 4	10	10
Acton Vale ¹	50	17 11 3	5	8
Total	3,692	1,810 4 0	262	..

¹ Plots started same year as valuation.



A V.L.C.S. POTATO QUEUE, SUMMER, 1917.

The site was formerly a rubbish heap.



Below is given the aggregate cash value of the respective crops :—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Potatoes	520	3	1	Celery	32	6	11
Cabbages	391	16	8	Beans, Runner	30	2	11
Onions	177	5	1	Vegetable Marrows	16	10	4
Turnips	102	18	11	Cabbage, Red	13	3	1
Parsnips	85	17	3	Leeks	12	18	9
Beans, Dwarf Kidney	50	0	7	Rhubarb	8	10	6
Unenumerated	49	14	1	Spinach	6	16	3
Carrots	49	9	6	Radish	6	5	11
Beet	47	0	8	Tomatoes	3	10	9
Lettuce	46	9	10	Seakale	2	9	6
Shallots	45	7	9	Beans, Broad	2	4	4
Cauliflowers	38	0	7	Herbs	1	19	6
Peas	34	6	8	Artichokes	1	16	6
Winter Greens	32	15	9	Cucumbers	0	2	4

In considering the value of the crops usually grown on allotments, the actual monetary gain must be based on their retail value, as it must be assumed that the saving effected is exactly represented by the cost of the produce which the housewife would purchase if the bargain were made in the usual way over the retail counter. If a gallon of potatoes sold in a shop cost 6d., it is reasonable to place the same value on a like quantity grown on an allotment. True, it might be argued that no account has been taken of the labour necessary to produce them, but the obvious reply of the allotment-holder is that, since gardening to him is a recreation and a pleasure and since the allotment produce is solely the result of spare-time labour, no account can be put to the debit side for the labour involved in growing the produce. Indeed, it is frequently asserted by plot-holders that the labour and time thus spent represents a distinct financial gain, quite apart from the advantages of growing and consuming one's own vegetables; for while you are occupied in gardening, other costly attractions and amusements cease to enter into the routine of ordinary town life. The only items, therefore, which can be put to the debit side are the cost of seeds, fertilizers, and tools, to which must usually be added rent, taxes, and a small subscription to the funds of the local allotment society;

and these total about 25s. annually for each holder of a ten-rod plot. On this basis, each group of allotment-holders puts into every acre of land something like £20 plus labour, and secures a return, based on present retail prices, of more than £100.

As to the kinds of vegetables which may be grown on a town plot, these may be said to include practically every variety suitable for the working-man's table. Potatoes form the staple crop, and on account of the close attention given to their cultivation and the keen rivalry which exists between the holders everywhere in regard to this particular crop, other things being equal, a greater bulk of tubers is grown on working-men's holdings than on a similar area under any other conditions. A Board of Agriculture official recently stated that, in a given area, the bulk of potatoes grown on allotments was actually 25 per cent. greater than that yielded by farm-grown crops, while the *London Star* calculated that the quantity of potatoes produced by allotmentees in 1917 was sufficient to supply the needs for a whole year of some three million people. Although the allotment-holder has admittedly surpassed all that was expected of him in the direction of supplementing the country's food supply, he is ready and able to do even more. By setting up a special department to assist and encourage allotment-holders, the Board of Agriculture might easily supplement home-grown food supplies to a degree which, in conjunction with the Government's new land policy in regard to farming, would ensure that neither a world shortage nor the conditions of war could ever imperil the people's food supply.

A question which must, sooner or later, receive attention is whether the spare-time worker can legitimately enter into competition with professional vegetable-growers and retailers and set up markets for the disposal by sale of produce grown over and above the requirements of his family. We can fully appreciate the point of view of the economist in desiring to prevent any waste of food whatsoever, and we know that it was with the best intentions that, with this end in view, markets for the disposal of surplus produce were advocated not long ago in official

quarters. But the first consideration is not *in what manner* facilities shall be provided for the disposal of surplus vegetables, but *whether* there is in reality an unusable glut of vegetables grown on allotments sufficient in proportions to warrant the setting up of local markets, and, if so, *to what extent*. So far as our own experience of the war-time, or ten-rod, plot has gone to show, there does not appear to be one jot or tittle of evidence to justify the adoption of such measures. Where there did happen to be a glut of any particular kind of vegetable last summer, this was in the main due to lack of judgment on the part of the holder in the planning of his crops and is unlikely to occur again. Thus, in some cases, large beds of cabbages or lettuces were grown, with the result that the producer was unable to consume them when in their prime; but this was purely the result of inexperience, and this year the mistake will be remedied by devoting a larger area of the plot to vegetables which may be stored—carrots, beets, potatoes, onions, etc.—and a smaller area to vegetables which must be used immediately or soon after they reach maturity. It is important to emphasize the fact that the essential purpose of the allotment garden is to enable the spare-time holder to supply his own needs in the vegetable line. It can be no part of his function to provide for the needs of others and so further damage the business of the greengrocer, except where, by mere accident, a surplus is grown. The whole pleasure of the allotmentee in his work rests on the fact that he is producing for himself and not for the commercial market. If he begins growing for sale, his crops will be far less perfect in quality, for it is an acknowledged trait of human nature that while, when we are working directly for ourselves, we put the best that is in us into our labour, when we are working for other people we merely endeavour to get the maximum return for the minimum labour, without any regard to quality.

A few enthusiasts are clamouring, in this connection, for a substantial increase in the size of allotments, even up to forty square rods ($\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre), but we believe this to be unnecessary and undesirable because, as has already been shown:

(a) The chief factor making for the success of the small (ten to fifteen square rods) allotment is that it can be comfortably managed by the spare-time holder.

(b) The greatest national economy is effected by the plotholder if he cultivates his plot in his spare time only. By this means a clear addition is made to labour at a time when labour is short.

(c) The larger the area to be cultivated (above ten to fifteen square rods), the less proportionately is the return obtained for a given number of hours of labour.

(d) The average worker has, in normal times, only sufficient labour to cultivate a small plot well.

(e) The area stated can be made to produce sufficient for the needs of an average-sized family.

(f) The demand for allotments exceeds by far the land at present available.

Last summer, at the instance of the Government Food Production Department, workers in a certain allotment area in the County of London were invited to state what amount of surplus vegetables was available for sale in markets which it was suggested might be set up. Part of this area was the Metropolitan Borough of Wandsworth, which probably contains more allotments in proportion to its size than any other district in the country. Yet in not a single instance was it shown that any quantity of surplus produce was available—and, incidentally, a large number of allotmentees wrote saying that, should there be any surplus, this would be disposed of by the exchange of different kinds of vegetables between the plot-holders, by gifts to friends and neighbours, by making weekly contributions to local hospitals, etc.

Many entertained a strong objection to selling any portion of their produce; but, at the same time, being fully alive to the need of preventing waste, they freely distributed whatever they had "over" amongst their friends and neighbours.

CHAPTER VII

How to get an allotment—Local societies—How to form them—
Rules for members—Advantages of allotment societies—Co-
operative hints.

IN anticipation of a further extension of the Cultivation of Lands Order, the landless mass of people should prepare forthwith to enlist in the allotment army by lodging their applications at the offices of their local allotment authority. In every borough and urban district in England and Wales the Council is empowered to enter upon unoccupied land, and in this way to provide facilities for families to grow their own vegetables. In regard to occupied land, it is probable that the present compulsory powers will be extended to enable such land to be utilized in the best interests of the State. Where a number of men desire to obtain allotments of a permanent character, they should apply to their local authority under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, 1908, referred to in the first chapter of this book. The local authorities who are responsible under this Act for the provision of allotments in urban areas are the borough or district council, and in rural areas the parish council, or, where there is no parish council, the parish meeting.

With respect to individuals, the steps which should be taken to acquire land and the conditions on which it can be held are, briefly, as follows.

Applicants in rural parishes should write to the clerk of the parish council, or to the chairman of the parish meeting if there is no parish council, and applicants in urban districts should write to the clerk of the urban district council or the town clerk, as the case may be. Where rules have been made by a council as to the manner in which applications should be made, these rules should be carefully observed. It does not, of course, follow (although it *should* follow) that the council will be able to obtain the particular land applied for, but the information furnished will be of use to them by enabling them to meet the wishes of the applicants as far as possible.

You cannot buy an allotment. You can only rent it. And once it has been let to you, you cannot sub-let it. Do not forget, if or when you resign your tenancy, that you are entitled to compensation for unexhausted improvements under the Agricultural Holdings Acts, or under the Allotments and Cottage Gardens Compensation Act, 1887. But you must make your claim, and make it in good time. The authorities will not press compensation upon you if they happen to find unexhausted improvements when you have vacated.

Allotment authorities can let land only to members of the labouring population resident in their parish, district, or borough. Women as well as men are eligible as tenants of allotments. If you want to know just what "labouring population" is taken to include, it includes all those persons whose main occupation involves manual labour, and would embrace most persons to whom an allotment would be useful. If, however, you do not come within the meaning of this definition and you want a bit of land, you should apply to the county council under the Small Holdings Acts. The county council is also the authority to apply to if (whether you be a member of the labouring population or not) you want more than one acre. Allotment authorities may provide allotments up to five acres in extent for one individual, but they are not obliged to provide allotments of more than one acre. If, therefore, you want more than one acre and the allotment authority refuses to help you, you should apply to the county council for a small holding under the Small Holdings Act.

If a parish council or a parish meeting or a district council (not being a borough council) fail to carry out their obligation to satisfy the demand for allotments in their district, the county council are empowered to provide allotments up to one acre at the expense of the defaulting authority, and the council can deal (as indicated) with applications for over an acre under the Small Holdings Act. If the county council fail to act, the matter may be further referred to the Board of Agriculture.

Local authorities can purchase or hire land for allotments either within or outside the parish, district, or borough, and can adapt such land for the purpose. They

are also empowered to erect a dwelling-house for occupation with any allotment of one acre and upwards. If borough or district councils cannot acquire land by agreement, they may purchase or hire it compulsorily, subject to certain restrictions. One of these is that no part of any holding of fifty acres or less can be compulsorily acquired. The purchase money or rent of land acquired in this way is fixed by an independent arbitrator or valuer. In cases where parish councils or parish meetings are unable to obtain land for allotments by agreement with landowners, they may refer the matter to the county council, who may thereupon proceed to acquire land compulsorily on behalf of the parish council or parish meeting. In every case, however, a compulsory order must be confirmed by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries before it can take effect.

The rents charged to allotment-holders are fixed at sums sufficient to cover the expenses incurred in providing the allotments, such as the interest on the purchase-money or the rent paid by the local authority for the land, the cost of adaptation, etc., and the expenses of management. If a house is erected on the allotment additional rent will be charged to cover the cost. A council is entitled to require the payment of one quarter's rent in advance.

So much for obtaining your allotment. But, having proved successful in your application, it will not be sufficient, if you are anxious to secure the best results possible and to establish yourself permanently on the land, to confine your attention solely to the actual work of cultivation. You should join your local organization—or, if such an organization does not exist, you should help to start one. No plot-holder of experience can fail to realize the vital necessity of close combination in order to protect his interests and give voice to his ideals. Hundreds of thousands of allotment-holders are already organized locally for domestic reasons and are now seeking to combine with the great national body which aims at bringing into use the waste acres of this country and establishing the right of every one to cultivate land. Many of these local allotment societies are, however, but loosely organized as yet, and the need for initiative and enterprise is so great that in many districts there

are groups of allotments quite unorganized and unattached to any local society. It is superfluous to point out that this is as bad for the individual cultivator as it is for the community, since, shorn of its social advantages, allotmenting is deprived of its primary interest and the standard of cultivation is reduced to the minimum. The advantage which accrues to plot-holders and to the movement as a whole where local societies exist cannot be overestimated.¹ Properly constituted and managed, such societies invariably exert a tremendously important influence in matters of both local and national interest.

It does not, as a rule, prove to be a very difficult task to form local allotment societies. Preliminarily, all that is needed is to hire a room and to circularize the local allotment-holders. It is so obviously profitable for allotment-holders to amalgamate that only a modicum of initiative is necessary in order to bring the society into being. Nor is it difficult to find volunteers who are ready to act in an honorary capacity as officers of the society. But in the framing of the rules obstacles do sometimes arise owing to lack of experience, and the following will probably prove useful to newly formed societies desirous of drawing up a sound, water-tight basis for the management of their affairs. It is not anticipated that this sample "constitution" will meet all cases without revision, but as a foundation on which to build it should serve its purpose.

RULES OF THE SOCIETY.

1. *Title*.—The Society shall be called _____ and be affiliated to the National Union of Allotment Holders.

2. *Object*.—The Society shall ascertain, represent, and support the collective opinion of its members upon all matters with a view to promoting their social and other interests.

3. *Membership*.—All plot-holders must be members of the Society. Membership may be conferred upon others subject to approval by the General Committee; such members shall be styled Hon. Members and admitted at the reduced fee hereafter stated.

The General Committee shall have power to refuse admission to, or expel from membership, any member whose conduct makes it undesirable that he be a member; but such member, if supported by 50 others, shall have the right to question the Committee's

¹ See pp. 43-45.

action at a General Meeting specially convened for that purpose. The Committee's action shall not be considered to be endorsed unless the motion to expel or exclude is carried by at least two-thirds of those voting—such voting to be by ballot.

4. *Subscription*.—The subscription shall be 4s. per annum, payable in January, in advance. This subscription shall entitle members to a free copy of the monthly issue of *Allotments and Gardens*,¹ to the use of the water on the estate, and to any other advantages which may accrue through the Society's activities in the purchase of seeds, manures, etc.

The subscription of hon. members shall be at the rate of 2s. 6d. per annum; such subscription shall entitle members to all the benefits as above, except the use of water and such others as may hereafter be named. Hon. members shall have no vote.

5. *Constitution*.—Subject to the control of the General Meetings (to be held in the months of February, June, and October) the work of the Society shall be carried on by the General Committee, which shall consist of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, and a committee of members.

6. *Election of Officers and Committee*.—The officers and Committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting to be held in the month of December.

The Vice-Chairman of one year shall be the Chairman for the succeeding year.

7. *Duties of Committee*.—Each member of the Committee shall be responsible for all matters connected with the good government of the section of such plots as shall be decided, and shall keep lists of all plot-holders on his section, report to the Hon. Sec. at once when a plot is becoming vacant, notify all changes of address, see that plots are numbered, kept tidy and adequately worked, and generally carry out the instructions of the General Committee as regards distribution of notices, collection of monies, etc.

8. *Rules for Plot-holders*.—(a) Every plot-holder must plainly mark his plot by a stake, giving sectional and plot numbers, and remove all rubbish as directed, keep his paths clean (free of weeds, etc.), and strictly avoid every form of nuisance to the public and the tenants of adjoining houses or land.

(b) No member shall have more than one plot, and any one known to be holding a plot elsewhere will be requested to give up the plot held under this Society. Not more than one member of any family may hold a plot.

(c) Plot-holders are not allowed to sub-let or divide their plots without written permission.

(d) Plot-holders must behave honourably with regard to their neighbours' plots and crops, co-operate for mutual protection against trespassers and damage to crops, and render such assistance in any direction as may be requested by the Committee, the time given in such assistance not to exceed half an hour in each month.

¹ *Allotments and Gardens* (2d. monthly) is the official organ of the National Union of Allotment Holders.

(e) Misconduct, ignoring the rules, or wilful neglect will subject the holder to the loss of his plot and crops.

(f) Only plot-holders and their families are allowed on the ground except by special permission.

(g) Plot-holders are particularly requested to notify immediately any change of address to the Committeeman controlling the section.

(h) The Membership Card must be retained, kept clean, and produced when required. If a card is lost or destroyed, one penny will be charged for a new one.

(i) Plot-holders desiring to exchange from one plot to another will be charged a transfer fee of One Shilling (which may be returned at the discretion of the Committee) but a transfer will be allowed only for special reasons which are acceptable to the Committee.

(j) All inquiries and complaints that cannot be dealt with by the Committeeman representing the section must be made in writing to the Hon. Secretary.

9. *Auditors.*—Two Auditors of the Society's accounts shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting.

10. *Alteration of Rules.*—No alterations of or additions to these Rules shall be made except at the Annual General Meeting, or at a specially convened General Meeting, on requisition to the Secretary, signed by at least 50 members.

Not the least of the advantages of allotment organizations is that afforded by co-operative effort. Where a number of persons is in possession of certain defined areas of land, growing practically the same crops, which mature at much about the same period; where the same kinds of seeds, manures, tools, and fertilizers are required by each cultivator; where each adopts similar methods and aims to achieve almost identical results—there must necessarily be scope for united action. With allotment-holders it should be truly a case of “all for each and each for all”; and generally this is so. Where there are no facilities for the co-operative purchase of seeds, each plot-holder is obliged to obtain his supplies individually and, in consequence, must pay the highest price; but, with a small amount of organization, a properly conducted society can arrange supplies for its members and obtain the best quality seeds at a liberal discount off catalogue prices. Manures and potatoes can be purchased in bulk and distributed locally in lots sufficient for the needs of each individual holder; and on both articles a large saving can be effected by placing bulked orders, for, as is well known, the cost of transit increases the charges on small lots out of all proportion to the initial cost.

Even with small seeds, when the supplies of these are normal, many pounds can be saved by societies buying in bulk and packeting them for their members. With artificial manures it will be found that, if purchased in bulk and mixed at home, not only is a great saving effected financially, but there is the even more important advantage of knowing that the ingredients are genuine ; whereas many of the compound manures (so-called) now on the market are little more than "scented sand."

The activities of a really live allotment society cover a very wide field indeed, and numerous benefits will suggest themselves to a committee bent on advancing in every possible way the interests of the members. Should there, by chance, be sufficient surplus produce to warrant such a step, arrangements can be made for its disposal ; while concerted effort would have the effect of securing more land for those not yet accommodated in the neighbourhood. (It should be the duty of every allotment society to receive applications for plots and to compile a list for presentation in the form of a petition to local councils or allotment authorities.) Spraying the potato crop might be done by hired labour, so that the whole of the crop on any group of allotments would be certain to receive attention during the limited time when spraying is most effective. Most soils require liming every two or three years ; the committee could ensure this being done by ordering so many truckloads of lime and having certain quantities delivered to each plot. Further, the committee of an allotment society could make arrangements for the water supply, one of the great obstacles which individual effort has so often failed to surmount. Various tools, of immense value to the small cultivators but too costly for individual purchase, might be procured collectively and employed co-operatively ; such as wheelbarrows, knapsack sprayers, syringes, hand cultivators, hoes, etc.

Collective action of the kind described is of immense value to all, not only because it is possible by these means to secure larger and better crops at a smaller individual outlay, but because a well-organized local allotment society is a social force of considerable influence in the district in which it operates.

CHAPTER VIII

Allotments as an individual necessity—The call of the land—
Allotments as a national necessity—"Easing up" the food
markets—The great potato scandal—Food troubles of the
future—War on monopoly.

IN the past the allotment-holder has been left to his own measures ; nothing but his indomitable spirit has enabled him to overcome the difficulties inseparable from his task. The same might truly be remarked of the whole agricultural industry ; but while the Government has recently displayed a remarkable solicitude for the farmer's welfare, there is as yet little indication that the well-being of the allotment-holder is occupying the attention of our rulers. It has hitherto been lightly assumed that allotments, viewed as a whole, are a passing phase, like roller-skating or diabolò—at best a war-time expedient only, and not a permanent necessity. Few, if any, of the great officials and experts of the Government are able to view clearly from their lofty eminence the humble needs of the allotment-holder ; nor, we believe, are they possessed of a sufficiently clear vision to understand in what a remarkable degree the allotment movement has gripped the popular imagination.

The war-time allotmentee is in deadly earnest ; he is fired with the determination to stick to his little plot as long as possible. It is not only that he has been afforded recreation more satisfying and more recuperative than the golf-course, the public-house, or the billiard hall. It is not only that many of his best friends are plot-holders and gardening is his chief topic of conversation. It is not only that he has benefited physically, mentally, and morally. His passion is rooted in something deeper, something more abiding, than any of these considerations.

There is a sympathetic connection, an inherent kinship between man and the land ; a link which generations of landless people have failed to break. In the veins

of every Englishman runs the blood of the old-time yeoman of the soil, who lived an active life on and by the land in years of peace, and in times of national stress formed the bulwark of the Empire. Why do people love the land, yes, *love* it? Why are men land-hungry? Whence springs this craving for the indefinable, this peaceful satisfaction and intense enjoyment of the townsman working on his plot? Is it not in his blood? Is it not part of his nature, which many years of the artificial life of cities have been powerless, and always will be powerless, to subjugate? It needs only that the spark of the townsman's natural life be re-kindled, and his unbounded enthusiasm will burst into a flame of eager, earnest desire. That is land-hunger. That is why we, who are all sons of the soil at heart, if we only knew it, speak affectionately of "Mother Earth." That is why the success of these new land-workers is assured from the beginning. And that is why, having again come into contact with the land, this great mass of patriotic citizens means to stick to it, or turn out Governments in the attempt.

But the case for the allotment-holder does not rest solely on the strength of his individual desires; it is based on the pressing needs of the nation itself. There can be no shadow of doubt that the ten-rod plot has proved a great factor in sustaining the supply and regulating the price of food. The possession of an allotment benefits not only the family of its spare-time cultivator, but, in a measure, the whole community; for by looking after his own needs and growing enough garden produce for his own wife and children, the allotment-holder releases a corresponding quantity for those dependent on market supplies.

Nor is it only the vegetable market which is "eased up" by his efforts. In other kinds of food—particularly bread and meat—the war-time plot-holder has helped to effect great economies. Every housewife knows that, where there is a good supply of vegetables, the quantity of meat necessary for the family dinner is very much less than where bread alone is eaten in conjunction with meat, or where the vegetable dishes are sparsely filled,

Before the era of rationing a plot-holder's wife stated that since she had had the advantage of allotment produce, the family butcher's bill had dropped from an average of 9s. weekly to 4s. 2d.—and this in spite of the meteoric rise in prices. Indeed, to such a degree (she said) had her family contracted the "vegetable habit" that, in order to compensate for the scarcity of bacon and eggs, vegetables left over from the previous day were palatably dished up even for breakfast—and greatly relished, too. The growing tendency of the working-class population to depend more and more upon vegetables and salads (when the latter are obtainable) is well illustrated by the remark of another plot-holder—a true-born cockney—who said, "We get bubble-an'-squeak for breakfast, vegetables-an'-gravy for dinner, for supper a couple o' spuds crackling straight from the oven, and off to bed we go."

There are no statistics available to show just how far spare-time allotment-holders have helped to solve the food problem, nor would it be easy even to form a rough estimate. The saving cannot be represented alone by the actual value of the stuff grown; many other items must be reckoned in such a calculation. There is, for example, the substitution of one kind of food for another, as a result of which our transport troubles have been relieved to an extent which is on all hands recognized as remarkable. Instead of meat from the Argentine and wheat from Canada or Australia, we eat potatoes or vegetables grown close to our own homes. Think, for a moment, what this means just now, when every cubic foot of space in a ship is wanted twenty times over. Consider the vast amount of tonnage saved. When the true value of allotments to the nation is once fully realized, we may take it for granted that the land so utilized will never be allowed to revert to its old iniquitous condition.

There is one aspect of the war which the civil population of our towns and cities will never forget: we refer to the scandal of the queues. The potato queues, which made their appearance in the early months of 1917, are now (thanks to the gallant efforts of our allotment-holders) almost forgotten; troubles connected with tea, margarine,



A LONDON POTATO QUEUE, SPRING, 1917.

The price of potatoes was 3d. per pound

meat, etc., have sensationally succeeded them. But in its day the potato queue aroused storms of indignation. True, there was nothing particularly new in the hardships suffered by those poor women who waited long dreary hours in rain and sleet, often ankle-deep in the slush of the gutter: poor women were born to suffer. There was nothing particularly new in the all-too-scanty meals which were the most that could be provided for those men who, returning home after their hard day's toil at producing war material, stood in far greater need of sustenance than any duke after a "shoot": working men were born to hunger. There was nothing particularly new in the death of so many poor children from pneumonia, contracted while waiting for the potatoes they never got: poor children were born to die. For centuries misery and unrequited devotion to duty have been the lot of untold thousands in every town where the wheels of monopoly and greed are oiled by the sweat of their unhappy victims. The country has long contemplated such outrages with unphilosophic stoicism. Inhumanity, it appears, we can endure with apathy. But inefficiency enrages us in this era of business-worship; and the hopeless muddle startlingly revealed by the wretched potato queues of 1917 brought the people nearer to rebellion than has any other circumstance in this terrible war. Those who customarily regarded poverty as a necessity had at least too much faith in the world to place potato queues in the same category. The sight of them injured the sense of decency, mocked the pride of the citizens of the greatest and wealthiest country of its time, wounded ultimately the prestige of the human soul. So Britain began to blink its eyes in the realization that such shameful spectacles could never have been presented to its sight had not that monarch of monopolies—Land—been enthroned in the citadel of the mighty.

The price of potatoes remained at 3d. per pound (i.e. £28 per ton) up to the end of June, and supplies were so scarce that an order was issued forbidding eating-houses and hotels to serve them on any days but Tuesdays and Fridays. Bread, too, was a shilling a loaf at this time, so that the difficulties of replenishing the household

larder became an even commoner subject of discussion than the military operations at the front. Housewives prayed for a miracle; and their prayer was answered. From the end of June to the third week in July the price of potatoes dropped lower and lower, until at last the markets were actually glutted with supplies and it was possible to purchase 7 lb. for 5d. This was undoubtedly the greatest triumph allotment-holders have ever achieved—for it was their achievement. They themselves did not directly reap the advantage of the cheap markets, inasmuch as their supplies were obtained from their own plots; but it was on this very account that the situation was relieved and a foul blot removed from the escutcheon of our shield. England must never forget how the allotment-holder abolished the potato queue—and how, moreover, in succeeding months when supplies of meat and butter and tea suddenly seemed to collapse like a pricked balloon, vegetables, thanks to the provident foresight of the plot-holder, were almost the only form of sustenance which could be obtained at a reasonable price, in reasonable quantities, and with reasonable ease.

Is it, in these circumstances, too much to claim that the allotment-holder has proved himself a national necessity?

So much, then, for what the plot-holder has done in the past. That he has justified his position is beyond possibility of dispute. But what of the future? Will his services be equally necessary to the welfare of the country in the days that lie before us?

"We are threatened with a world shortage of food not in 1918 only, but also in 1919 and 1920." So said the Minister of Agriculture and the Director-General of Food Production in November, 1917. "To what extent we shall be short of food depends—on the extent of our success or failure in increasing our home-grown supplies." The circular in which this warning appeared was addressed to farmers and landowners. But it applies also, and in an equally important degree, to allotment-holders. That the exhortation was not sent to them may be taken, according to taste, as an exhibition of bad form or common sense. It was bad form because allotmentees had already done so much that their achievements should have been

officially recognized. It was commonsensible because, whereas it has been necessary repeatedly to appeal to the farmers and landowners to increase the area under plough, the Board of Agriculture has never once found it necessary to renew its appeal to allotment-holders. Thus, the Board found it necessary to apply compulsory measures in order to bring into cultivation land in the possession of the farmers, and the Government was even obliged to fix the price of corn and potatoes as an inducement (or should it be called a bribe?) for these crops to be grown. Labour, horses, implements, were also provided. But in the case of allotments, all that it was necessary for the Government to do was to provide the land. The holders did the rest: supplied the labour, found their own tools and seeds, and took all the risks of a glutted market when the supplies became available.

Just as there can be no question but that, as long as this war lasts, allotments must "go on," so there can be no question but that the same stern necessity which brought them into being will operate long after the dawn of peace, and thus ensure a temporary extension of the concessions now in force. Something more, however, than a temporary extension will be imperative until the nations of the world discover some saner method of settling their disputes than a recourse to arms. Only if the land is used for the people by the people can we be certain that neither bad harvests abroad nor the constricting conditions of war will ever again imperil our national food supply. The experience of the past three years has taught us that, as a nation, we dare not face the future with calm indifference. The threatened development of aerial and sea-going machines of war must give us pause. The submarines, the Gothas, are bad enough. But after the submarine, after the Gotha—what? Some devilish contrivance, maybe, which will render our whole fleet, naval and mercantile, *hors de combat*, and finally dissipate the few remaining advantages of that "splendid isolation" which have of late been so speedily vanishing before our eyes. The future is fraught with the gravest possibilities. It is fraught with the gravest *probabilities*. And the one certainty we can see

ahead is that the security of these islands will come to depend more upon the amount of land brought under cultivation than upon any other factor. We talk of fighting "to the last man." It would be more rational to talk of fighting to the last sod. The land must be tilled to the uttermost. In the interests of the community and for the protection of the country, land monopoly in its present form must be swept away, root and branch.

It has been quite clearly demonstrated that no national necessity should be privately controlled. In bringing millions of additional acres of idle land into cultivation, the Minister of Agriculture has done yeoman service, not alone for the present generation but for posterity; for when his department bestowed compulsory powers to bring about the conversion, the principle of appropriation by the State for the common weal was definitely established. "Land for the People" is now something more than a hollow note of the political songster. It is a fact, and must remain so in principle for ever.

Reviewed from every possible angle, the allotment movement is of sufficient national and personal significance to deserve the attention and support of the general public. It is thriving now under sufferance. Its only support is the strong arm of the Defence of the Realm Act. What will happen when that support is withdrawn, as it will be? Will the bugbear of waste land be permitted to reappear? or will the people support the allotment-holders' demands for legislation to secure permanent tenure, legislation to prevent land from lying unemployed, to the detriment of the well-being of the nation?

The co-operation of the non-allotment-holding public is essential; for without the backing of the masses neither the plot-holders' organizations nor any Government, however favourably inclined, will be powerful enough to assault the ramparts of the land monopolists.

CHAPTER IX

Security of tenure—Aims of the National Union of Allotment Holders—Extension tinkering—The property fetish—A “peace peril”—What are we fighting to protect?

“How long shall I be allowed to retain possession of my allotment? How can I ensure permanency of tenure?”

These are the questions which now keep persistently recurring to the minds of our amateur food-growers. The prospect of eviction appeals to them not only as uncharitable, in the face of what they have done at a time of unprecedented need, but unjust. Their aspirations are essentially modest. All they desire is that they shall be allowed, wherever possible, to remain in undisturbed guardianship of the plots which they have cultivated with so much care, and that additional land shall be provided to meet the requirements of unsatisfied applicants. Why, they ask, should land which is doing good work under their guidance be restored to proprietors who, having regained it, will allow it to return to a state of slothful unproductivity? In a phrase, they demand the abolition of the Right to be a Dog-in-the-Manger.

It may be a little difficult, at first glance, to see why landowners should so often desire to retain possession of land which they put to no useful purpose, which yields them no revenue from year's end to year's end. Probably most landowners do not know clearly themselves. They are aware that it “may come in useful” some day—but if it is not benefiting them at the moment, why should it not be made to benefit some one else? They have a vague feeling, too, about establishing a dangerous precedent, departing from a long-observed and (to them) important principle. But they rarely openly define this principle, because, if it were defined, it would reveal such unblushing and indefensible selfishness. If you withhold from some one else something which is of no use to you and would be of considerable use to him, it is hard to see

what other line of defence you can put forward than that Riches and Poverty are purely relative, and that your own riches do increase by *keeping* other people poor. But land monopolists naturally refrain from making this statement of principle explicit. They know full well that its realization would be more than flesh and blood could bear. Indeed, to do them justice, it is more than their own flesh and blood can bear, and many of them unquestionably deceive themselves with other reasons, which they readily swallow as a tonic for their faith in themselves.

To the impartial observer, however, the case for security of tenure by allotment-holders is unanswerable. How is it to be won? We strongly urge that—

1. Allotment-holders should form themselves into local societies, on the lines already indicated.

2. Where more than one allotment society exists in the same district, a district association should be formed and managed by representatives of each of the societies involved.

3. Each district association or local society should affiliate with the National Union of Allotment-Holders. (See Appendix C.)

Provincial sections of the Union exist in every part of England, Scotland, and Wales, and through one or other of these provincial sections any local allotment society, no matter how small or isolated, can connect itself with the main body of allotment-holders in Great Britain.

Briefly, the objects of these provincial sections and of the National Union of Allotment Holders, which may be taken as representing the desires of the entire allotment movement, are :

1. To secure such legislative or administrative action as will bring about the provision of more land for allotments; in order to

- (a) satisfy applicants at present unprovided with allotments ;

- (b) encourage a large increase in the number of applications for allotments ;

- (c) permit of an increase in the size of existing allotments in cases where holders have the necessary skill and leisure to cultivate them intensively, or where they are not large enough to make the holder and his family self-supporting with respect to vegetable produce.

2. To provide greater security of tenure for allotment-holders.

3. To extend the powers of the existing Cultivation of Lands Orders.

4. To secure in all town-planning schemes the provision of permanent allotments, and, where allotments provided are at a distance, travelling facilities.

5. To form a district register of allotment-holders and officially assist the formation of local allotment societies and their grouping into district federations.

6. To establish close co-operation between local societies and the national union of societies, with the object of

- (a) providing allotment-holders with the benefits which can be obtained from skilled instructors, lectures, demonstrations, pamphlets, etc. ;
- (b) arranging for the co-operative purchase of seeds, tools, manures, etc. ;
- (c) organizing, where necessary, the systematic marketing of any surplus produce.

One would think that the demands and objects outlined were reasonable and practical enough to ensure a sympathetic acceptance on the part of all those who see the great potentialities of the allotment movement in the direction of much-needed land reform. Yet, in spite of numerous petitions from allotment societies and resolutions passed by various local councils and public bodies, urging a really substantial extension of tenure, nothing radical has yet been done. True, the Board of Agriculture intends, according to a statement made by Sir Richard Winfrey in the House of Commons, to grant an extension in respect of the war-time plots to the end of 1920. But this will be taking something more than two bites at a cherry. The war, in the view of some experts, is not yet half over. The food crisis, in the view of all experts, is bound to grow steadily more acute. And all who have had experience in tilling the soil and growing crops are well aware that, unless a further liberal extension is allowed, these temporary allotments will not carry the amount and variety of crops in 1919-20 which looks like characterizing them in 1918. The reason for this is simple. Security is essential to land-workers if the maximum amount of food is to be grown. To obtain the greatest possible yield, it is necessary to make preparations many months in advance, and so to invest money and labour in the soil with a view to being recouped in the following

year. The gardener virtually "casts his bread upon the waters," and watches for its return, knowing quite well that in the round of a year or so he will be rewarded. Thus, security of tenure is of the utmost importance to him if he is to obtain the best results from his land. The facts in the possession of Mr. Prothero show that, war or no war, for another three or four years at least there will be a world shortage of food. The facts in our possession show that, given facilities, hundreds of thousands of new spare-time cultivators can be added to the great army of food producers without adding to the national burden either of labour or of money. The demand for allotments has never approached the point of being satisfied. In no single case do we know of any number of vacancies in allotment fields. In the offices of the V.L.C.S. there are thousands of pigeon-holed applications, and whenever one vacancy occurs, dozens of new applications for it are immediately received. This waiting list, which refers mainly to the London district, contains names which were filed a year ago; and we know that a similar demand exists elsewhere.

The two things most urgently needed are, we repeat :

(1) *Security of tenure for existing allotment-holders.*

(2) *Additional land for unsatisfied applicants for plots.*

It is within the power of the Government to provide both; and we would respectfully point out to Mr. Prothero that the next move is up to him.

The great danger foreseen by allotment societies lies in the inherent tendency of Governments to *suggest* and *recommend*, where they should *enforce*. Governments of the past have been remarkably and, we think, significantly solicitous on behalf of the possessing classes. "Property," they have said, "is sacred." And before the war, and for two years after its commencement, the land was consequently permitted to remain idle in the hands of private owners until the demands of the State *compelled* the Government to force some of it into cultivation. Had it not been for the war and Dora, this would never have come about; and it is clear that, without united effort, full control of the land can never be wrested from the grasp of the monopolists. It is, no doubt, easy enough

for departments of the Government to adopt strong and revolutionary measures under the stress of war, but when the war is over—ah, there is one of the real “perils of peace”! Governments notoriously adopt the line of least resistance; their policy is to carry out the wishes, not of the majority, but of that body (which may chance to be the majority but generally is not) which is liable to cause them most embarrassment if they do not conform to its views; and in this question of retaining in a state of cultivation the land needed to feed the people, it is possible, nay probable, that the Government will endeavour to placate both the landowners and the people who cultivate the land by allowing the former to arrange their own terms with the latter. Such a step would be disastrous. We know of instances in which, owing to continual pressure on the part of the local allotment authority to whom the powers of the Board of Agriculture in respect of the Cultivation of Lands Orders were delegated, certain privately owned occupied land was forced into use for allotments, but in which the settling of terms was left for arrangement between the owner and the local allotment society. What was the result? Let us give a specific and typical example of the sort of thing that happened. While outwardly approving of the scheme, the owner compelled the local society to sign an agreement which hampered the men’s work and placed all manner of restrictions on their efforts to produce food. The plots were limited to five square rods, which made systematic cropping impossible. The rent which the society was obliged, by the terms of the agreement, to charge its members was 2s. a rod, *or £16 an acre!*—a ridiculous charge for land in a district where the average agricultural rent does not amount to more than £2 an acre. No buildings of any kind were allowed on the allotments, which were placed out of bounds on Sundays, the society was mulcted in heavy rate and water charges in addition to the exorbitant rent, fences had to be repaired out of the society’s funds, and all manner of unnecessary and harassing restrictions were included in the agreement, the legal charges for which (a crowning infliction!) had to be paid by the society. Two of the

allotment-holders had to attach their signatures to this famous and infamous document, involving them in enormous liabilities. What was the aim of all this? To frighten off the allotment-holders, of course, to teach them not to interfere with private land, even though appealed to by the Government in a time of unparalleled danger. But, in spite of the unfair advantages which the owner obtained, he did not succeed in frightening off the allotmentees. They were too keen. They were willing to pay the iniquitous price, and though their zeal was, perhaps, greater than their wisdom, it is impossible not to admire their action.

This is but one of many instances which could be cited in support of the contention that, if the future security of this country is to depend upon the production of home-grown food supplies, our land laws must undergo a complete and radical change. Both systems—Governmental and private control—have stood their trial, and the one has succeeded where the other has failed. There is abundant evidence to prove that this statement is correct. For years before the war, as we have shown, allotment societies struggled continuously against the swell of apathy, indifference, and contempt of the land-owning classes. It is only fair to state that in some cases owners leased or loaned land to workmen who wished for allotments on quite reasonable terms and conditions; but the great majority either preferred that their land should lie waste rather than that it should be made to grow food, or placed impossible restrictions on small working-men's societies when letting it.¹ This was not only the experience of allotment societies, but of local councils attempting to provide land under both the Small Holdings and Allotments Act and the Cultivation of Lands Order relating to occupied land. In a lesser degree, the County War Agricultural Committees have found the same obdurate indifference to social and national needs. The Government itself was obliged to shore up its requests for increased cultivation with the prop of compulsion.

Would this have been necessary if it had been possible to rely upon the good sense and patriotism of the land-

¹ See letter from Board of Agriculture on page 92.

owners? And if such is the case in time of war, what will be their attitude when peace comes and the old rights and privileges resume their normal standing?

As the sponsor of the people and the guardian of national ideals and interests, the Government must preserve every acre of land in its present state of cultivation until long after the declaration of peace, and food is both cheap and plentiful. Never, under any condition whatever, must land be allowed to pass from fertility to uselessness. It must be made to contribute its quota to the upkeep of the country. It must create wealth. It must not remain the drone of civilization. We have spilt some of the nation's best blood and spent thousands of millions of money in protecting British soil. Has this been done for the good of landowners as individuals, or of the community as a whole? For whom has Britain been defended at such enormous cost—and by whom? Have we squandered all these lives and all this wealth to protect land for a few owners who will insist that it shall remain idle, unproductive, and a nuisance when the conflict between nations is a thing of the past?

Let each man answer according to his lights. Sufficient here to reaffirm that the ownership of land carries with it public responsibilities and a national duty, and that he who prevents our Mother Earth from yielding up her treasure of food and mineral wealth is surely an enemy of the people, a direct precursor of poverty, and possibly of famine.

APPENDIX A

STATUTORY RULES AND ORDERS, 1916, No. 852.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM.

The Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, dated December 8, 1916, made by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries under Regulation 2L of the Defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Regulations, 1914.

WHEREAS under Regulation 2L of the Defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Regulations, 1914 (which was inserted in those Regulations by Order in Council, dated the fifth day of December, nineteen hundred and sixteen, and is set out at the foot of this Order), the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as "the Board") are empowered to exercise certain powers with a view to maintain the food supply of the country and to authorize any Local Authority to exercise those powers on behalf of the Board.

And whereas the Board are of opinion that for the purpose aforesaid such Order should be made as is herein contained.

Now the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries do hereby authorize the Council of the administrative county of London¹ and the council of each municipal borough and urban district to exercise on behalf of the Board the powers conferred by Regulation 2L as respects any land within the county of London or the borough or district, or which in the opinion of the council can conveniently be cultivated by persons residing in the county of London or the borough or district, subject nevertheless to the provisions of this Order:—

1. A council shall not enter on any unoccupied garden or pleasure ground usually occupied together with a dwelling-house and shall not enter on any common land, as defined in Regulation 2L, without a further consent given by the Board.²

¹ Later transferred to the London boroughs. (See pages 94, 95.)

² The Cultivation of Lands Order, 1917, amended as follows: "A council shall not enter on any garden or pleasure ground

2. *A council shall as soon as possible after entry on any unoccupied land give notice of the entry to the owner of the land.*¹

3. A council may in the case of occupied land agree to pay a rent for the use thereof but not in excess of the rent payable by the occupier of the land, or if held with other land, in excess of a fair proportion of the total rent so payable, or where the land is occupied by the owner, in excess of the annual value for the purposes of income tax together with the tithe rentcharge (if any).

4. A council may arrange with any society having for its object the cultivation of vacant land for the cultivation of any land on which the council has entered, and may delegate to such society such of the powers of the council under this Order as may be necessary for the purposes of the arrangement.

5. A council may purchase any seed, manures, or implements required for the cultivation of the land and sell any article so purchased to the cultivators, or allow their use of the implements at a price or charge sufficient to cover the cost of purchase.

6. A council shall as far as practicable arrange that *the payments made by the cultivators for the use of the land shall cover the cost incurred by the council in providing the land or adapting it for cultivation*, and shall not incur any expenses in the exercise of the powers hereby conferred (except in respect of compensations payable under paragraphs 3 and 4 of Regulation 2L,²) which will involve the Board in a liability to repay the council a total amount exceeding two pounds for each acre provided by the council.

7. An arrangement with a person or society for the cultivation of the land shall be subject to determination by the council or Board at any time by notice to that person or society, and shall not provide for payment of compensation occupied or usually occupied together with a dwelling-house and shall not enter on any common land, as defined in this Order, without a further consent given by the Board, or on any occupied land, which is not within the county of London or in a county borough, except with the written consent of the occupier of the land or with the sanction of the War Agricultural Executive Committee of the county."

¹ The italics here, as in later passages, are our own.

² Amended February 20th., 1917, Cultivation of Lands Order, 1917 (No. 2): "Except in respect of compensation payable under subsection (3) of Regulation 2L or payable under subsection (4) of that Regulation in respect of any deterioration of the land,"

to that person or society in excess of the value at the time of quitting of the crops growing on the land and the labour expended upon and manure applied to the land since the taking of the last crop in anticipation of a future crop or provide for the payment of any compensation if the determination takes effect *on or after the first of January, 1918.*¹

8. The land shall not be used for the production of vegetable crops which continue productive for more than one year or for grazing.

9. A separate account shall be kept by a council of all its receipts and expenditure under this Order, which shall at any time be open to inspection by an officer of the Board.

10. This Order applies only to England and Wales.²

11. This Order may be cited as the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916.

In witness whereof the Board have hereunto set their Official Seal this eighth day of December nineteen hundred and sixteen.

(Signed) SYDNEY OLIVIER,
Secretary.

REGULATION 2L (SO FAR AS IT APPLIES TO ENGLAND AND WALES).

2L (1) Where the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries are of opinion that, with the view to maintaining the food supply of the country, it is expedient that they should exercise the powers given to them under this Regulation as respects any land, the Board may enter on the land,³

(a) *without any consent if the land is for the time being unoccupied,*⁴ or was unoccupied on the twentieth day of November, nineteen hundred and sixteen, or if the land is common land, and

¹ Substituted on April 26th, 1917: "the first of January, 1919."

² On February 20th, 1917, in the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1917 (No. 2) this clause was deleted and the following substituted: "In this Order the expression 'common land' includes any land subject to be enclosed under the Inclosure Acts, 1845 to 1882, and any town or village green and any other land subject to any right of common."

³ Amended Cultivation of Lands Order, 1917 (No. 2): "and cultivate the land, or arrange for its cultivation by any person either under a contract of tenancy or otherwise."

⁴ I.e., not liable to payment of poor rates.

(b) in any other case with the consent of the occupier and the person in receipt of the rent of the land, and cultivate the land, or arrange for its cultivation by any person either under a contract of tenancy or otherwise.

(2) The Board may after entry on any land do or authorize to be done all things which they consider necessary or desirable for the purpose of the cultivation of the land or for adapting the land to cultivation, including fencing, and may also during their occupation of the land or on the termination thereof remove any such fencing or work of adaptation.

(3) Any person who cultivates land under any such arrangement shall, on the determination, by or on behalf of the Board, of the arrangement, if the determination takes effect before the *first day of January nineteen hundred and eighteen*,¹ receive from the Board such compensation as may have been agreed under the terms of the arrangement, or, in default of any such agreement, as the Board may consider just and reasonable, and shall not be entitled to any other compensation.

(4) On the determination of the occupation of any land by the Board compensation shall be paid to any person injuriously affected by any deterioration of the land caused by the exercise of the powers under this Regulation, the amount of that compensation to be determined, in default of agreement, by a single arbitrator under and in accordance with the provisions of the Second Schedule to the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1908.

(5) The Board may with respect to any land authorize any local authority to exercise on behalf of the Board any of the powers of the Board under this regulation.

(6) In this Regulation the expression "occupied" and "unoccupied" refer to such occupation as involves liability to payment of poor rates, and the expression "common land" includes any land subject to be enclosed under the Inclosure Acts, 1845 to 1882, and any town or village green and any other land subject to any right of common.²

¹ Substituted on April 26th, 1917: "the first of January, 1919."

² In the amended Order—Cultivation of Lands Order, 1917 (No. 2)—the following addition is made under paragraph 6 of Regulation 2L: "A local authority authorized to exercise on behalf of the Board any of the powers of the Board under this

The following circular, referring to the above Order, was addressed to the London County Council and the Councils of Boroughs and Urban Districts in England and Wales :—

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,

4, WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON, S.W. 1.

12th December, 1916.

SIR,—

1. I am directed by the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to inform you that a Regulation has been made by Order in Council under the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act, 1914, with the object of increasing the food supplies of the country by extending the existing powers of providing land for cultivation.

2. Acting under this Regulation the Board have made the enclosed Order,¹ in which the Regulation is embodied, empowering allotment authorities in urban areas to exercise on behalf of the Board the powers conferred by the Regulation.

3. The principal object of the Regulation and the Board's Order is to secure the cultivation of unoccupied land in districts where labour for such cultivation is available by authorizing Local Authorities to take possession of such land *without the necessity of obtaining any consents*, but power is also given to take possession of occupied land by agreement with the owner and occupier and to take possession of common land with the consent of the Board.

4. I am to make the following observations for the information and guidance of your Council on the principal points arising under the Regulation and Order.

ACQUISITION OF LAND.

5. Land may be taken either within the area of the Council or *outside its area* if it can conveniently be culti-

Regulation may exercise such powers in respect of land of which the local authority is owner or occupier, and may retain the rents and profits arising from such exercise of these powers, but shall not be entitled to receive from the Board any rent or compensation for the use thereof or for the exercise by the local authority of any powers under this Regulation in respect of that land."

¹ See Statutory Rules and Orders, 1916, No. 852, reprinted above.

vated by persons residing within the area. It falls into three classes :—

- (a) Unoccupied land. The Councils named in the Order may enter forthwith on any unoccupied land, with the exception of gardens or pleasure grounds usually occupied together with dwelling-houses. Notice of entry must be given to the owner. (See paragraph 6 of the Regulation as to definition of "unoccupied.")
- (b) Occupied land may be taken by agreement with the owner and occupier.
- (c) Common land may be taken subject to the consent of the Board in each case, but consent will not be given to any scheme which would damage materially the natural beauty or amenities of a common or which would seriously prejudice the interests of the commoners or the public. Moreover, the Board will not consent to schemes for the taking of parts of commons unless they are satisfied that the local demand cannot reasonably be met from the other classes of land.

TENURE OF LAND TAKEN.

6. The Order in Council has effect only *during the War*, and accordingly the right of the Board, and of those claiming under them, to retain possession of land under the authority of the Regulation terminates at the end of the War, *but under the Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Bill of this Session it is proposed that the Board shall have power to extend the period of occupation under this Regulation for such period as may be necessary for securing any annual crop growing at the end of the War.*

7. Though cultivators cannot, therefore, count with certainty on more than one year's crops from the land, this should repay the labour expended in preparing the land and the cost of seed and manure.

8. The Board or a Council can give up possession of the land at any time, and this should be done whenever they are satisfied that the land is required by the owner for immediate use for building or other exceptional purposes.

RENT PAYABLE FOR LAND TAKEN.

9. *No rent will be payable by a Council for any unoccupied or common land taken under the Order.* For occupied land such rent will be paid as may be agreed with the owner and occupier, provided that it does not exceed the limit imposed by Article 3 of the Board's Order.

LETTING OF LAND TAKEN.

10. Land taken under the Order may be let by the Local Authority for cultivation in small allotments either to a society or to individual cultivators. Councils are advised where possible to arrange for the letting to or through the agency of any existing society operating in its district or to one formed for the purpose, and power is given by the Order to delegate to such society all the powers of the Council except the actual taking of the land. *In the case of land let to individual cultivators it has been found by experience that as a general rule ten rods is sufficient for each cultivator.*

RENT PAYABLE BY CULTIVATORS.

11. Councils should arrange as far as possible that the expenses of providing land should be recouped by payments made by the cultivators. In the case of unoccupied or common land, where no rent is paid by the Council, it may not be necessary to charge more than a nominal rent to the cultivators, but if rent is paid by the Council for occupied land the rents charged should be sufficient to cover the payments.

ADAPTATION OF LAND FOR CULTIVATION.

12. Councils are authorized to do all things which are necessary or desirable to adapt any land taken for cultivation, *including fencing*, but it would obviously be unprofitable to incur any considerable expense on land held for a short and uncertain period. In some cases it may be essential to provide fencing, but, as a general rule, the responsibility of protecting the plots from trespass or pilfering should be placed on the cultivators themselves. Notices might be posted asking the public not to trespass on or damage the plots. (See page 90.) Councils who have horses and the

necessary implements available can render valuable assistance by breaking up the land in the first instance.

PROVISION OF SEED, MANURES, OR IMPLEMENTS.

13. The Order authorizes Councils to provide *seed, manures, or implements at cost price to the cultivators*. It will therefore be possible to arrange for the purchase in bulk of seed potatoes, for instance, a form of assistance which would be of the greatest possible value. If there is a military camp in the neighbourhood it will often be possible to obtain manure at very reasonable rates.¹

RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF LAND TAKEN.

14. Land taken under the Order may not be used for the production of fruit or vegetable crops which remain productive for more than one year, or for grazing. The limited period of occupation makes it undesirable to allow such crops as rhubarb or asparagus, which can be grown profitably only when several crops can be taken, and the principal object of the scheme is to stimulate the growth of substantial foodstuffs, such as potatoes, rather than luxury crops. The use of land for grazing is prohibited in order to secure the greatest possible production from the land. It is not, however, intended to prohibit the keeping of poultry, rabbits, etc., if a Council thinks this is desirable in combination with the cultivation of the land.

EXPERT ADVICE TO CULTIVATORS.

15. The Board hope that Councils will endeavour to arrange for expert assistance to the cultivators in the preparation and cultivation of their plots. The Royal Horticultural Society, Vincent Square, S.W., has readily promised its active help, through the agency of its members, who are scattered all over the country, and the co-operation of professional gardeners and nurserymen should be invited. A list of the leaflets issued by the Board is enclosed, many of which should be of considerable assistance to the cultivators. Copies of any of the leaflets will be sent on application.

¹ It has been found impossible to act on this advice on account of the excessive charges for and difficulties of transport. Thousands of tons of valuable manure have been withheld from allotments owing to these causes.

COMPENSATION ON QUITTING.

16. Owners of land taken under the Order will be entitled, when the occupation of a Council under the Regulation terminates, to compensation for the deterioration (if any) of the land caused by its use, the compensation being determined, in default of agreement, by arbitration in accordance with the procedure of the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1908.

17. Cultivators of land taken under the Order will not, in normal circumstances, be entitled to any compensation on quitting, as the possibility of retaining possession after the end of the war until the growing crop is secured should allow of arrangements being made so that the land should be vacated at a time of year and with sufficient notice to obviate any loss to the cultivators. But the Order provides that if in any case the tenancy of an allotment is terminated prior to 1st January, 1918,¹ compensation may be paid in accordance with paragraph (3) of the Regulation and Article 7 of the Order.

18. *Any compensation payable as above, either to owners or cultivators, will be defrayed by the Board.*

FINANCE.

19. In exercising their powers under the Order, Councils will be acting on behalf of the Board, and no charge will fall on the local rates. It is hoped, as stated above, that in most cases the expenses of providing land will be recouped by the payments from the cultivators, but any deficiency will be met by the Board, provided that, apart from the compensation referred to in the preceding paragraph, it does not exceed a total sum of £2 for each acre taken by the Council. Within this limit Councils are authorized to incur expense in carrying out their powers under the Order. A separate account must be kept of all receipts and expenditure under the Order, which will be open to inspection at any time by an officer of the Board, and the Board will settle any claim by a Council as soon as the occupation of the land terminates.

¹ Substituted on 26th April, 1917: "The first of January, 1919."

LOCAL CONTROL.

20. The powers of Councils under the Order have been set out in some detail in order to avoid as far as possible the need for correspondence with the Board on the subject. The President is most anxious that Local Authorities who are familiar with local conditions should be free to use their own discretion to the fullest extent and that they should be as little fettered as possible by departmental control. Moreover, the heavy pressure of work on the depleted staff of the Board makes it impossible for them to deal with a mass of additional correspondence on the subject. It is hoped, therefore, that, with the information given in this letter, Councils will be able to administer the Order without reference to the Board.

APPEAL TO OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF LAND.

21. In many parts of the country there are considerable areas of land which, though technically occupied, are not fully cultivated owing to shortage of labour or other causes. Such land, especially if it is close to urban areas where spare-time labour for more intensive cultivation is available, might with great advantage be used temporarily for the purposes of the Order. The Board feel sure that owners and occupiers will be ready to assist Councils by placing suitable portions of such land at their disposal, and that many of them will be willing in addition to give materials for fencing and help in laying out the plots and preparing the soil.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

22. The President desires me in conclusion to commend the matter to the earnest consideration of your Council and to ask that no time may be lost in putting into operation the powers conferred by the Order. Public notices should be issued at once inviting applications from societies or persons who are willing to undertake the cultivation of land which can be acquired under the Order. The matter is urgent, as, if land is to be taken in the best condition for putting in spring crops it is desirable that it should be broken up before the winter is over. The President realizes that Local Authorities are already seriously overburdened with work, but *the urgency of increasing the food supply by all*

possible means is such that he feels sure he can rely on the active assistance and co-operation of your Council. The work which has been done in London by the Vacant Land Cultivation Society, 14, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.,¹ and by similar societies elsewhere has proved that excellent crops of potatoes and other vegetables can be grown on most unpromising sites, and if similar efforts are made in other urban areas a very substantial addition will be made to the food supplies of the nation. The success of the scheme will depend upon cordial co-operation among all those who desire to increase our food production, and *the President feels sure that there will be no lack of goodwill on the part either of Local Authorities or of landowners and occupiers*, and that men and women of all classes will come forward and give all the time and labour they can spare so as to secure that every available acre should be making its contribution to our home-grown supplies of food.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient Servant,
(Signed) SYDNEY OLIVIER,
Secretary.

In January, 1917, the following letter relating to public land was addressed to the Allotment Authorities:—

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,
4, WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON, S.W.

SIR,—

With reference to the Board's Circular Letter of the 12th ultimo and to the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, I am directed by the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to inform you that he has received enquiries as to the application of the Order to the cultivation of public parks, open spaces, recreation grounds, and other "unoccupied" land in the possession of Local Authorities.

Under *Regulation 2L* (a copy of which was printed with the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916), the Board would have power to enter any "unoccupied" land belonging to a Local Authority and to arrange with a Local Authority on

¹ Address now: 8, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C. 2.

behalf of the Board to cultivate the land or provide for its cultivation by the residents in the locality.

It is not, however, clear that the general powers deputed by the Order to Local Authorities to enter on land and deal with it after entry are strictly applicable to land of which the Local Authority are already in possession.

If action is taken under the Regulation and Order the receipts and expenditure concern the Board and, in particular, the Board may become liable for the payment of compensation under paragraph 4 of the Regulation. In some cases this compensation might amount to a very substantial sum, which would be out of all proportion to the value of any food produced by the temporary use of the land for cultivation. It would be unreasonable, for example, to expect the Board to bear the cost of returning a recreation ground which had been broken up for the purpose of growing vegetables for one season.

At the same time Mr. Prothero would entirely approve of land belonging to a Local Authority being temporarily devoted to the production of food where this will not involve at the end of the operation a serious liability for the cost of the restoration of the land to its original condition, and he would desire to encourage any such action which Local Authorities may be in a position to take on their own account and at their own expense in cultivating or arranging for the cultivation of land belonging to them but not immediately required for the purpose for which it was acquired.

Mr. Prothero would desire, however, that, in order to safeguard the liability of the Board for the payment of compensation under paragraph 4 of the Regulation, Local Authorities should inform the Board when they proceed to cultivate or arrange for the cultivation of their own land, if they are acting under the Regulation and Order.

The Board are quite willing that the Regulation and Order should be construed as enabling Local Authorities thus to proceed on behalf of the Board in any case where the Local Authority informs the Board that the land is of such a character that no substantial claim for compensation under paragraph 4 of the Order will thereafter be made by the Local Authority on the Board.

TRESPASS.

Representations have been made to the Board to the effect that although in some cases fencing is essential to protect the land and crops, in other cases it would be sufficient, or at any rate improve the position, if trespass on the land were made an offence under the Defence of the Realm Acts. A Regulation for this purpose was accordingly made on the 10th inst., in the following terms :—

“ 2N. If any person without lawful authority enters or remains on land of which a Government department or any body or person authorized by a Government department is in possession¹ under the powers conferred by Regulation 2L or Regulation 2M, and on which notice of this provision is conspicuously displayed, or damages any crops growing on any such land, he shall be guilty of a summary offence against these Regulations.”

It will be observed that to make the Regulation operative it is necessary that notice of the provision being applicable to the particular land should be conspicuously displayed on the land.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
(Signed) SYDNEY OLIVIER,
Secretary.

Referring to the above Order, a Circular, dated January 31st, 1917, was addressed to the London County Council and the Councils of Municipal Boroughs and Urban Districts in England and Wales as follows :—

CULTIVATION OF LAND IN URBAN AREAS.
LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD,
WHITEHALL, S.W.

SIR,—

The Order of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, dated 8th December, 1916, conferring powers on certain Local Authorities in respect to the cultivation of land in urban areas has been favourably received throughout the country, and there is evidence not only that there is a desire

¹ This has since been amended to cover all land “ used as allotments or field gardens.”

on the part of the general public to take advantage of it, but that many Local Authorities are themselves proceeding actively in the matter.

The Government consider it of the utmost importance that full effect should be given to the Order, but they realize this can only be done if there is a real driving power in each district. As a rule this driving power must come from the Local Authority, and it is therefore desirable that, where satisfactory measures have not been adopted by voluntary organizations, the Local Authority should immediately take all necessary steps to secure a full cultivation of available land within their district. For this purpose it may be well to appoint a working Committee which will inspire general confidence to carry the scheme into full execution.

A few points have been raised on which it may be desirable that the Government should express their views :

1. *Co-operation of Women.*

It is essential for the success of the scheme to secure the active co-operation of women in order that female labour should be utilized as fully as possible.

2. *Direct Cultivation of Land by Local Authorities.*

If a Local Authority, having possession of a piece of land suitable for the purposes of the Order, find that they cannot dispose of it to cultivators, and that it would be left idle unless cultivated by the Council themselves, we should not wish to offer objection to direct cultivation by the Local Authority, if they would thus be able to take advantage of spare labour which would not in any case be employed on food cultivation. *The primary aim, however, of the policy of the Government is to promote the voluntary efforts of urban inhabitants to cultivate available lands in their spare time.*

3. *Excess Expenditure by Local Authorities.*

The Board of Agriculture are not willing generally to increase their contribution beyond the £2 per acre already announced, but where it is shown to the satisfaction of that department that a larger expenditure, not exceeding an additional £2 an acre, was reasonably incurred, the grant will be increased so as to cover one-half of that excess, and the Local Government Board will be prepared, in the case

of a Local Authority whose accounts are subject to audit by a District Auditor, to sanction, under the Local Authorities (Expenses) Act, 1887, the expenditure represented by the other half of the excess.

4. Rates on Land Cultivated.

The Local Authority are, under the Order, acting as the agents of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, and *the land taken may be regarded as Crown Land and thus not subject to rates.* The cultivators will not be in a position of ordinary tenants, but rather in that of users of the land by permission of the Local Authority for the express purpose of increasing the total food supply of the country, and in these circumstances we think they may be regarded as *not liable for the payment of rates.*

Yours very faithfully,

RHONDDA.

R. E. PROTHERO.

On February 24, 1917, the following further Circular was addressed to the London County Council and the Councils of Boroughs and Urban Districts in England and Wales:—

BOARD OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES,

FOOD PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT,

72, VICTORIA STREET, LONDON, S.W.

SIR,—

1. I am directed by the President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to refer to the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916, and to say that he has received representations from certain Local Authorities that the powers conferred by the Order are *insufficient to enable them to meet the demand for small allotments, owing to the fact that the unoccupied land which can be taken without consent is not sufficient for this purpose and that difficulties have arisen in arriving at agreements with owners and occupiers for the taking of occupied land.*

2. I am to inform you that, in view of these representations, Regulation 2L has been amended so as to empower the Board to enter on any land, whether occupied or unoccupied, *without the necessity of obtaining the consent of the owner or occupier.* An Order has been made delegating to the Allotment Authorities in urban areas the powers conferred on

the Board by the Regulation as amended, subject to the restriction that, except as regards land in the County of London or in a County Borough, the Allotment Authority may not enter on occupied land without the written consent of the occupier unless they obtain the sanction of the War Agricultural Executive Committee of the County. This Order will supersede the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916.

3. Mr. Prothero desires me to point out to your Council that the extended powers conferred by the new Order should be exercised with the greatest possible care and discretion. The object of the Regulation and Order is to provide land for the purpose of increasing the crops available for consumption by the public, and its powers should not be used to interfere with land which is already being fully cultivated, or with meadow or pasture land of good quality, the breaking up of which would involve considerable expenditure on restoration on the termination of the occupation.

4. Mr. Prothero desires me to say also that, in view of the urgent importance of maintaining the milk supply, no land should be taken under the Order which is being used for the grazing of cows, or which is otherwise essential for dairy purposes.

5. The Regulation provides that claims for compensation in respect of land upon which the Council has entered under the Regulation may be determined, in default of agreement, by a single arbitrator under, and in accordance with, the provisions in the second schedule of the Agricultural Holdings Act, 1908. The Council should, however, endeavour to arrange the amount of rent to be paid in accordance with paragraph 3 of the Order for any occupied land taken under the Order. It is not necessary that the question of rent or compensation for the use of the land should be settled before entry on the land by the Council, but before entering on any land the Council should satisfy themselves that there is a reasonable probability that the payments which will be made by the cultivators will be sufficient to recoup the probable outlay by the Council. Any deficiency up to an amount not exceeding £2 an acre will be met by the Board as provided by Article 6 of the Order, and, as stated in paragraph 3 of the Circular Letter issued by the Local Government Board on the 31st January last, a further contribution may be made in certain cases.

6. The Local Authority will still require the further consent of the Board for entry on common land, and it may not enter on any garden or pleasure ground occupied, or usually occupied, with a dwelling-house.

7. I am to add that some Local Authorities have sought power to utilize for cultivation land in their own possession which is not immediately needed for the purpose for which it was acquired by, or transferred to, the Council, and which can be used for the purpose of cultivation consistently with the trusts (if any) affecting the land, and they have assured the Board that this can be done without expense to the State.

8. Mr. Prothero does not think that public recreation grounds in populated areas which are turfed and are used to any substantial extent for recreation can with advantage be broken up, but there is much public land which does not fall within this category, and the new Regulation accordingly provides that your Council may arrange for the cultivation of such land, either under a contract of tenancy or otherwise, and may retain any rents or profits arising from the use of such land, provided that no claim is made on the Board for any financial assistance by way of rent, compensation, or other payment.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) SYDNEY OLIVIER,

Secretary.

APPENDIX B

DEFENCE OF THE REALM.

CULTIVATION OF LANDS.

Whereas under Regulation 2L¹ of the Defence of the Realm (Consolidation) Regulations, 1914 (which was inserted in those Regulations by Order in Council, dated the Fifth day of December, Nineteen hundred and Sixteen), the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries (hereinafter referred to as "the Board") are empowered to exercise certain powers with a view to maintain the food supply of the country and to authorize any Local Authority to exercise those powers on behalf of the Board.

¹ See p. 80.

And Whereas the Board are of opinion that for the purpose aforesaid such Order should be made as is herein contained.

Now the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries do hereby authorize the Council of the Metropolitan Borough of ——— to exercise on behalf of the Board the powers conferred by Regulation 2L as respects any land within the said Metropolitan Borough, subject to the provisions of the Cultivation of Lands Order, 1916.

In Witness whereof the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries have hereunto set their Official Seal this Twenty-second day of January, Nineteen hundred and Seventeen.

(Signed) F. L. C. FLOUD.

APPENDIX C

(Reprint from Official Leaflet issued by the National Union of Allotment Holders.)

THE NATIONAL UNION OF ALLOTMENT HOLDERS.

The National Union of Allotment Holders is the child of necessity, just as the vast expansion of allotment cultivation was the outcome of the stern necessity which called that expansion into being. Not only has the expansion of allotments cultivation been a revelation from the point of view of the collective national interest, demonstrating the huge possibilities the movement provides for a big step forward in the production of food supplies from British soil, but for solid reasons the cultivators themselves have come to regard the cultivation of the land for the production of their own vegetable supplies as an undeniable advantage and a boon they most intensely desire to retain. What was granted as a war emergency expedient must, as a logical consequence of its proved national value, be permanently incorporated into the national life. The National Union of Allotment Holders has this objective as its supreme aim.

Its objects are:—

To secure the greatest possible degree of permanency for the plots held under the Cultivation of Lands Orders, and, in cases where it is necessary in the general public interest that such plots shall be surrendered, to ensure that other suitable ground shall be found for the dispossessed holder.

To urge upon the Government that, in cases where allotment-holders are willing to cultivate larger plots than those now provided under the Cultivation of Land Order, provision shall be made for them to do so.

To secure that legislation is enacted to provide on a large scale for the extension of allotments cultivation and in such a manner that, neither during nor after the war, shall those willing to cultivate land as allotment be denied the opportunity.

To organize a system of co-operative purchase and sale of seed potatoes, tools, fertilizers, manure, etc.

The objectives enumerated by no means exhaust the contemplated activities which will naturally come within the scope of a national organization, but they are obviously those which the pressing needs of the moment demand.

In order to achieve its objects, the National Union of Allotment Holders has been conceived upon lines so broad and representative in the truest democratic sense that its constitution will be both democratic and businesslike. In its constitution the co-operative business side of the movement has been foreseen, and the avenues along which co-operative effort, for all purposes, shall flow from the single society to the Union, and from the latter to the single societies have been created.

The constructive form of the Union is such as to provide machinery for carrying on work of every description, from rendering assistance to the smallest group of plot-holders to form a local society, and assisting the tiniest group of men or even one man, to obtain land for allotments, to presenting in a unified form to the appropriate authority the general needs and requirements of the allotments movement, either of a national or local character, or to the carrying out of a great scheme for the co-operative purchase and sale of seeds, implements, etc.

(Signed) D. CHATER.

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